

MINE OYSTER

Essays and Encounters

Whether travel broadens the mind or not it stimulates it. And, before one is aware, it turns into an interior journey, to the world of values, at least such values as one dares to hope or admit. Here are a few travelogues, dialogues and that continuing conversation of the mind with itself which Arnold characterized as a mark of the modern.

Away from familiar surroundings, thought turns homeward, seeks for roots. But in a strangely alien and anguished universe where is home, where are the roots? Every one has to ask, if not answer, these obstinate questions, to open one's own oyster as the author has done, partly, his

The essays, ranging from sharp to sober, from occasional pieces to committed writing, include interviews with the eminent as well as the not so well known. Here, among others, you will find an un-American poet and mystic, Aldous Huxley, Arnold Toynbee, Albert Schweitzer, Ira Progoff, Dante, the Message of the Bomb, a fellow-traveller on a busride, the World Fair, an Ashram in Arizona, Swami in America, the Beats, the Existential prophets, the Intellectuals; What is Total Education, "Why I am Still Teaching" and a brief look at Tradition and Modernity.

Continued on back flap

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SISIRKUMAR GHOSE



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P R E F A C E

Some, if not many, of these essays and encounters owe their origin to a short assignment abroad. Then the habit was kept up. Whether travel broadens the mind or not, it stimulates it and, before one is aware, it becomes an inward journey, to the world of values, or such values as one dares to hope or admit. Is not when one is away from familiar landmarks that thought, sad, bitter, but alive at every point, eagerly turns homeward? But in a world denuded of shared belief, where is home? That is a question which a displaced generation, Kafka's disinherited son, has to ask, if not answer. Everyone will have to do it in one's own way, to open one's own oyster, as I have done, partly, mine.

On re-reading these essays, written over a period of years, it seems to me that, quite unconsciously, and perhaps a little repetitively, they pursue a somewhat common theme: that, under the surface, men are alike, and, slightly more problematical, that life is holy. There is also, maybe, another unspelt article of faith: the longing to be whole or the heroic gesture and its possibility. But I hold no brief for any particular system, or the country where the encounter began, or even for India, where I more or less belong. The united states to which, along with others, I look forward is not a matter of geography. It is an idea, the idea of unified man and unified society, to be found nowhere today, except in the dreams of the few. Our goal is fixed, perhaps, beyond all present maps, beyond the ken of our orbiting astronauts. To know that goal one will have, in the end, to go within. There is no other way. On our ability to clarify and continue that common pursuit will depend the dignity and future of man. One way or the other we are all involved. To deny that would be to deny our humanity.

I am grateful to the management of *The Hindustan Times*, where most of the articles first appeared, especially to Mr. Uggur Sain, for so readily agreeing to provide a forum for a tyro. The glory of journalism lies in its transience, they say. Embalmed in a book, it is unreadable, quoth Virginia Woolf, and herself disproved it. But, then, today who is afraid of Virginia Woolf? I am, but. . . .

April 14, 1968
Santiniketan

S. K. G.

Dedicated to

J. Robert Oppenheimer,

Rachel Carson,

বুড়ি, the little lady, and

the Vairabi Memsahib

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A PASSAGE TO AMERICA

To be hauled in mid-semester and in one's middle years from the sequestered shades of Santiniketan to the noise and glare of a, however small, mid-Western American university town—such is the story fate had written for me. The final news of an unexpected appointment when it came, in July, found me in a fix. To go or not to go? Old trees cannot be easily uprooted. I had long been a home-keeping lad. The glamour of *vilayet* too was long over. But in the end the native hue of resolution got sicklied over with the pale cast of reflection. In brief, I fell. And so here I am, in the Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, en route. Trying to look brave but really a bit bewildered!

Cars whiz by. All the time. An unending stream. More cars than men. And, oh boy, what cars! Of all shapes, sizes and colours. *U pluribus unum*. Now and then a sedate air-conditioned bus, with surprisingly few passengers, moves by in unhurried majesty. The buses run, I was later to learn, more out of habit than of necessity. It was the same with the railway. Excuse me, railroad. Tired business folk were returning home. Men in shirt sleeves, with that lacklustre look which not even the highest standard of living could hide. There are also a few young ladies moving about with an absorbed air. What were they doing? Chanting the Holy Name or was it the plainest of facts, was it the mighty chewing gum? Negroes dot the place, furtive, defiant, unwanted. And while I (I think) discreetly take in the scene my own sherwani draws the glance of the curious, which I pretend to ignore.

I try to recollect. I had left Dum Dum, when? Yes,

two days back. A whole lot of nephews and nieces had crowded the car. They all hoped to come to America one day. I was their standard-bearer. A student had flown all the way from Shillong. A brother, himself in the last throes of a quixotic trip to Australia the next day, came in at the last moment and gave me all the advice I needed. The Customs were polite and surprisingly quick. The plane was packed, but except for a loquacious Sardarji no one was inclined to talk. And when the air hostess chirped in her all too acquired Hindi, *Kripakar dhumrapan mut kijay*, please do not smoke, it fell on whorled ears. One or two snored. At the back a child cried. It was the only human sound in the machine. A child crying in the night for light.

The mobile cage opened its gate in Bombay at midnight. In the early dawn we touched Cairo. It was exciting to see real and rather menacing Egyptians serve tea and soft drinks at five in the morning. The lounge was littered with curios. One look at the price tag and all possessive instinct was cured at once.

Another living curio, which we could not help seeing through the plate glass, was the vision of an affluent gent (no doubt about it) who had gone into a barber's shop at that early hour. So far as he was concerned, there was no crisis in civilization. As his ample cheeks were being lavishly and lovingly lathered I could not help admiring his aplomb. His total unconcern with what was happening in and about him would have pleased Marcus Aurelius.

But my meditations were cut short. We were in the air again. The next hop was at Rome. The sharp wind and the sunlight came as a real surprise, so like India in early winter. A knowing passenger—every plane contains one or two—sniffed the air and said, whether to us or to the air, it was not clear: "This is the weather I like." We humbly agreed.

Soon we took off for Paris. But the plane was running late and we were not allowed to go out, not even for the coffee break. So, farewell France! Bonjour Tristesse! See you later.

It was midday when the plane touched London airport. Queen's English filled the air. As we were being cleared out we discovered an old Sindhi lady who had travelled with us and now seemed apparently stranded. Outsiders were not allowed to come within the enclosure and she could not find her relative. The case looked worse because she did not speak any English. But I admired her courage and quiet dignity. In the end we left her with an airport officer and took the bus to the city terminal at Victoria. It was a nonstop run through suburbia, at the end of which I was greeted by Iswarmurti, who had flown down from Oxford to chaperon his old teacher through the City. My worries were at an end.

"How was the journey, sir?"

"Excellent, and how are you?"

"Not bad, sir. Is *this* all your luggage? Oh, it's good to see you, sir. Wish you would stay a little longer than just one day."

Iswar was bubbling. He had so much to say, what he had done and what he wished to do once he got back. For his return journey he had worked out a rather unconventional itinerary—through Russia and the Middle East. (Did he get lost in Syria? I wonder, for I haven't heard from him for a long time. Where *are* you, Iswar?)

From the terminal we drove to a friend's house. It was a long way off and cost me a stiff pound. The friend had left a message that he would be coming soon. "Soon," we soon found out, was an elastic, relative term and after some time we left for the City—mainly in search of food and some sightseeing by the way. An afternoon in London was all that I had but Iswar was determined to pack more into it than any travel agency would dare to do.

To a tired traveller—sad confession—food came first. Preferably Indian food. After a short run on the tube we walked from end to end of a deserted Regent Street (it was a Sunday) till out of staid Anglo-Saxon respectability loomed the notorious—the word is not in the dictionary, if you are thinking of looking up—Veeraswami's Restaurant. Rococo

was the word. If there was fake Orient anywhere on earth, it was, you felt, here, it was here. The clientele, I was not surprised, was mostly English, at least non-Indian. But we were late. His turbaned Highness told us that in his orotund Decan Hindi:

We retreated and found ourselves on the road again. After some questioning we could reach "Curry Corner." Again more Englishmen, and women, than Indians. However, we had little time for mass observation and sat down to a hurried grab of rice, bungal, and lady's finger (unmercifully we must have eaten how many, I forget). And the can be archaeological curd! Five shillings a cup. So much for patriotism.

We then retraced our steps, where

Now stiff on a pillar
Nelson stylites in Trafalgar
Figure
Gleam'd the British what once
they were

In one corner pale boys and girls were distributing hand-bill. The Anti-Nuclear Protest Meeting. Among the speakers mentioned was Bertrand Russell. We were naturally eager to hear, at least to see him. But he was not there among the crowd on the platform. So we moved on. The Embankment. A blind man was playing on the flute. Sad symbol of the artist in an indifferent society.

Across the bridge we went up to the Royal Festival Hall. Coffee over, we visited Parliament. It was closed but there, on the roadside, stood a mute Cromwell. Westminster Abbey, not far away, looked aged and, as ever, impressive. We turned to the Poet's Corner. Our inveterate old Indian *samskara* made it quite impossible for us to walk over the graves of the dead poets. (But do poets ever die?) Tate Gallery and St. Paul's beckoned from the distance. The shadows were lengthening and we mused by the Thames. Since night life was not what we were looking for, we returned to our digs. My London day—all too brief—was over.

The morning bus took us back to London airport. This time the luggage gave some trouble. The suitcase was all right. But not the handbag. It contained a few books. These the lady at the customs did not like. I was politely informed that I would have to pay a pound each for these. It was no use pointing out that the Indian and, earlier, the London Customs had allowed these to pass. We got them weighed again. This time fates were kinder and even *la belle dame sans merci* behind the counter relented. We were through. I went in, while Iswar stayed behind. Later, as I was going up the plank, I looked back. There he was waving, waving. But, what with the hurry and pushing my way up, I had all but forgotten about him! So much for human nature. As I looked back at his eager, shining schoolboy face I suddenly felt sad. But what *he* saw was, however, a smile. Not the guilt.

*The journey was uneventful. All jet journeys are. You hardly feel that you are moving. There was trouble ahead of me. My ticket was for Washington. But towards the end of the journey a neighbour informed me that the plane wouldn't go to Washington but to Friendship airport which served both Washington and Baltimore. This was a bit unnerving. Things got worse when at Friendship airport no friend turned up as I had been led to expect. Worse, a hotel had been fixed for me, but—an unsolved mystery—the address had never been given to me. Washington is a fine city, but not the best place to get to at the first evening you arrive. I tried one or two places, in vain. In the end I got a room in Dupont Plaza, which cost me nearly Rs. 70 for the night's stay. Not bad. From its high battlement I watched the moving pageant for some time. But I was tired, tired and so, after a bath and a glass of milk, I went to bed.

Next morning when I reported to my sponsors they were all very sorry and at once gave me the hotel address. It was quite near. They also invited me to a symposium and, later, to lunch in a cafeteria. I could not help noticing that most of the executive positions were being held by women. All wonderfully wise and they put you at your ease at once. We

got on well. (The souvenirs I had brought from India proved useful aids.) It was late in the evening when, by way of the White House and the Capitol, I returned to my hotel.

I was leaving Washington the next evening. Someone had suggested a visit to the Indian Embassy. It was a "must." A must is a must. And I went. There was a slightly *démodé* Sikh sentry trimming his locks at the gate. I passed by the phenomenon to the information desk where a young lady in magenta sari was busy paring her non-existing nails. She smiled sweetly and inquired whom or what I wanted. All very nice but all very unreal too, I felt. It was like being inside one of Edgar Allan Poe's stories. In the end I went to see Mr. X. Mr. X was very nice too. But oh, how sad he looked! He had his car, his T. V., a fairly reasonable salary, not to mention the allowances, his family was with him. What ailed him, really? It was difficult to say. When I asked him for a list of books on Indian culture he looked even sadder. Books? Yes, just a few. Just as I had expected: Gandhiji, Prasad, Radhakrishnan, Nehru, etc. These were mostly for reference and couldn't be loaned. But there were films. These one could borrow. His voice was empty and I did not press.

As I was coming down the stairs a rumpled, raucous laughter broke in from one of the side rooms. Soon the door opened and revealed the owner of the voice. An Indian demoiselle—of course in *sari*—was exchanging confidence with an American opposite number. With that knowing as-I-was-telling-you look which service in the embassy, and the UN, entitles you to. Long live Independence. *Bande Embassy Mataram*.

But avault melancholy! My train was due in a couple of hours. My sponsors had thoughtfully provided for a Pullman. I was wondering what it would be like. In sober fact it turned out to be a very small enclosure—"roomette"—with a built-in bed and, a refinement I would have been happier to do without, the w.c. straight in front of you. When you drew out the bed at night it rested, that is you

rested, on the Object. You were sleeping on it. . . . I slept very little.

It was a lonely crowd in the night train. Each turned in the door once and turned once only, each in his prison thinking of the key, each confirmed a prison. The most important events were changing trains and the meals. At last, after nearly 24 hours the train pulled in at Columbia, my journey's end. I was expecting to be met and looked out in search of an Indian face. Oh, there they were, not one, but many. What a relief! I burst into native woodnote wild.

I had reached. But had I arrived?

My classes would begin from tomorrow. Tomorrow and tomorrow.

AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN

Once in a while university life can be too much with us. Learned lectures and attempts at witty conversation may become the easiest of habits, effective reality-killers. I was beginning to feel a little jaded. A change was what I needed. I had a day "off" and didn't know what to do. Then something happened.

At an Indian Cultural Association (neither Indian nor Cultural nor Association of course) meeting my *dhoti* and *chadar* were calculated to mark me out from the rest of my when-at-Rome-do-as-the-Romans-do compatriots. The apparel oft proclaims the man. That I was the person responsible for certain courses in the university she had no difficulty in figuring out. Was I—? Yes, I was. (But who was she?) She readily introduced herself. She was a friend of L—, one of my students. She herself taught in a school. Would I care to meet the schoolchildren some time when I was free? Would I? I would.

Later when Mrs B— rang me up wanting to know if I would be willing to meet one of her classes I jumped at the offer. The voice sounded attractive, soft, gentle, and low. Perhaps it wasn't wise or dignified to be so eager. I didn't care. My own school, Santiniketan, had lots of children on the campus. Here, I had missed them from the beginning. I didn't want to miss the chance.

The day came. As J— drove me to the Jefferson (Jeff, for short) Junior High School, the snow lay thick on the ground. When we arrived Mrs B— was taking a class. A few minutes later when she came out (looking extraordinarily like Jacqueline Kennedy) I felt reassured. I could

imagine how the children adored her. But when I suggested, rather gallantly, that I should be allowed to sit in one of her classes, she brushed it aside with light laughter. Probably she suspected that I wouldn't make one of the brightest pupils. Not very wrong either. My admiration for her didn't suffer.

Soon the fatal bell rang. The classes emptied and the corridor rang with merry squeals and excited exchanges. But at sight of me a strange hush fell on the whole group. They stopped short. Many looked at me, with dubious feelings, if not open suspicion. Who was this man? It was very critical company. I am critical, if nothing else, was written all over their furtive phiz. Mischief, thou art afoot, I said to myself. It was all very lively—and unacademic. My "off" day had begun well. I was enjoying myself.

Another bell and the colourful critical crowd was safely steered into the class room. I followed obediently. Came the inevitable introduction. "Children, we are *very* happy to have So-and-so with us today. We have been reading about India and how exciting that we should now have someone from India to talk to us. I am sure you will enjoy listening to, etc."

Fifty pairs of eyes were fixed on me and I began looking for something under the collar. It wasn't there. The stare of students, as every teacher knows, can be an ordeal. Sometimes a look can kill. To my surprise I found my auditors looking rather pleased, God knows why. The crisis was over. There was a little light in their eyes. It was the green light. I took the hint, coughed and went ahead. And when I had time to survey the miniature audience there was a lad who—if the family album may be trusted—looked exactly as I must have looked at his age. Made you feel rather odd. And, like me, there he was, in the back benches, at once grave and gay, if you know what I mean. Dear *alter ego*!

I felt more myself and went ahead with my speech. This, or something like this, is what I said. A little touching up—like a little make-up—is no sin.

"I am happy to be with you. Really so. Teaching college lads is of course fun. But you can have too much of it. And so, when Mrs B—wanted to know if I would be willing to meet you, I said yes. I don't know if it was a wise thing to do. At any rate, I would be able to see you all. That is why I came. But, oh, I wish I hadn't to speak! But, you see, Mrs B— wouldn't have allowed me to come otherwise. So, dear children, lend me your ears, both your ears, for a while. (Here Mrs B— smiled. The boys and girls wondered what I was up to. So did I. This is not what I had intended to say.)

"In my country (I went on) we are taught to love children. We are even asked to respect children. (Stare of disbelief.) You want to know why? Because you are our hopes, you are the future. In you we hope to see fulfilled our dreams, all that we wanted to be and could not be. But please don't start feeling big because of what I have said. Children have their duties too. One of these is that they should always respect their elders. Three persons you must always obey, all your life: father, mother and teacher. I hope you do. (Do they? I asked Mrs B—, sitting in a corner. Ask them, she replied. A broad collective smile was all the answer I ever got.)

"The place, or university, I come from is called Santiniketan. (I wrote it on the board and instinctively the students took it down in their exercise books.) It means a place of peace. It certainly is a quiet place. I hope one day some of you will go there. You will be welcome, I can tell you that. One strange thing about this university is that we have a high school, even a junior high school, in the very heart of the university campus. You can well imagine how gay and noisy the whole place must be at all hours of the day. It does at times disturb our more serious studies, but we don't mind, really. You see in a place like that learning is not a torture, but a pleasure.

"Another thing, which might surprise you. Our classes are generally held in the open. Of course winter in India is far less severe than here. What do we teach our students?

Nearly everything that is taught here. But there is one thing, above everything else, that we tell our children. We tell them that this world of ours belongs to Man and not to this or that nation. We are all men, and ought to share the good things of life together. It is not such a simple lesson, believe me. Few believe in this, fewer live up to it. Of course many talk of it, as I am talking now.

"This is the time of life when you learn about things. And I wish you luck. I want you to learn all about yourself, your country, about other people, their land and their culture too. But what I would most like is that you should know and love this world in which we must live together or not live at all. You see, my dear friends, there really is no "other" people in the world, no "other" country. That is the big mistake. There is just one country and one people. This family is the Family of Man. This is what all the great religions and the great teachers have always said, often in vain. This is what the Indians have been taught from the earliest times and have come to believe. We believe that we belong to each other, that we need each other. There is always trouble when this is forgotten and then you begin to hear of war, of rumours of war, of fall-out shelters and other horrors. All this is a great shame and defeat—for the spirit of Man.

"Children fight. I know you do. But you are never as horrid as we grown-ups can be. Tell me, do you ever lead armies to destroy other old, familiar ways of life? I am sure the very thought never crosses your mind. And yet, it is sad to think, of such stuff is history made. A shameful history, on the whole. Let us begin a new chapter, a cleaner chapter, of more human history.

"We in India have never believed in these man-made difference. Nor have we believed much in war as a means of solving difficulties. The world is one and war is inhuman. I don't know if you have heard of Asoka. (Again I write the name on the board and the students do as before.) He was a king with a difference. He is the only king, king among kings, whom H. G. Wells thought of including in his

outline history of the world. And why? Because he had the imagination to repent of his warlike ways and turn to the paths of peace. After he had won a big victory Asoka's heart was saddened at all the dead and the wounded. He gave up his old ways and became a man of peace. Can you think of any modern politician doing that? They would much rather destroy each other and the world than change their ways. Which is better?

"The One World to which we belong, or ought to belong, can never become real unless we get rid of these differences, and of war, which does no one any good. Little children understand all this. But, alas, not their parents, nor the hard-hearted politicians, dressed in their brief hour of authority. Hitler would have been a better man if he had to babysit now and then. (Broad laughter here. Not all understand. But never mind. Do as others do.). Did not the Bible say, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings ?

"India, the land I come from is both big and old. Though it is now unfortunately broken, it is still a big country. It is an old country and an old civilization, at least 4,000 years old, perhaps more. But of course we don't judge a people or a country by its age. Old men, you know, are not always the best of men. What tells us more about a nation is not so much its age but the things it has been trying to do, the things it has believed in, its ideas and its faith. It is that which really makes a nation.

"Now, from the earliest periods of her history the thinkers, the wise men of India, the old Rishis (again the blackboard), have repeated the same lesson. It is a lesson of love and toleration. They have, as you say in this country, worked out a way of life. It is a way of life which we respect and try to follow. Not very well, I am afraid, but we try. These teachers and sages are our natural leaders, the teachers of an entire nation.

"To them we bow. You may have heard of one of them, Gautam Buddha. The young handsome prince Siddhartha had left his home in search of truth. And when he had found

it he taught men the way of friendliness and compassion for all creatures. He had a big heart.

"Another well-known name today is that of Mahatma Gandhi, the man of peace. He gave us freedom without fighting, that is without violence. But there are many others—the type is still alive—kindly, modest men, for the most part leading obscure lives. And what do they do? They work and pray for the happiness of all men, and not for themselves, their families and their nations only. They are the salt of the earth. They are India. A country is known by its people and the people are known by their conduct. The ancient Indians believed strongly in human unity, more than that they wanted to know and serve God. Their children do the same. In the name of that ideal, of One World and One God, of service to God and humanity, I bring to you the greetings from the children of my country and my school.

"We all look forward to the day when the Selfish Giant will be ashamed of himself and open wide the gates of his garden—for the children of the world to walk in and start playing the eternal game. As one of our wisest men has said: "What is God after all?" An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden. When I think of those who will come after—or survive me—I feel as if I were taking part in the preparations for a feast, the joys of which I shall not share" * We all look forward to the day when the world will become what it was intended to become, a garden of God. We who are old may not live to see that day. But it is good to know that it is coming. Then even death would not be such a bad thing, you know. God bless you all. Remember, no men are strangers, no countries foreign."

As J—drove me back to my old room in the university it all seemed cold, cheerless. I felt dreadfully weak. What had happened in the meantime? If someone had asked me what I had been doing during the last half hour or so, I would probably have said, Words, words, words.

* Dag Hammarskjöld.

Children are a great solace. But they can drain you too. It was folly to be wise. In any case, why did I darken their afternoon with my own dreary thoughts? Their shining schoolboy faces haunted me. Come again, they had said. Yes, I would go again and tell them something more pleasant next time. But would there be time? I wonder.

MEET AN (UN-) AMERICAN POET

His room, or cubicle, lay just by my side. I had seen him flit by, a presence and a mystery. Something wraithlike, the wispy hair, the wrinkles, the quick movement, but above all the eyes! Something lurked behind those eyes. He had, you felt, been present at some bridal of day and night, dared to peep before his time upon the secret doings of divinity.

Colleagues spoke of him with a hush and a whimper, the attitude was fairly divided between deference and despair. On my rare visits downtown I had seen his photograph on the outside of gramophone discs reading his own poetry. That explained. He was "the poet in residence." (Yes, dear reader, there is such a thing in American universities.) I myself came from a poet's school, Santiniketan. To wish to know more about him was the simplest noblesse oblige.

The chance soon came. There was an announcement that he was going to give a talk on Indian Mysticism. On inquiry I came to know that Indian meant Red Indian. Curiouser and curiouser. I was further told that he was one of the few white members of the Indian Brotherhood, that he had lived with them and been accepted as one of them which is more than what Gauguin or Lawrence had ever done.

The next day as we happened to cross each other on the staircase I told him how eagerly I was looking forward to his talk. He turned round, gave me a warm handshake and said he was delighted to meet an Indian. He had known Tagore and, one of the few, actually read him. His own attitude to life was more Vedantic than anything else, he told me.

After a while, among other things, he asked me how I

was feeling about America. As I hesitated for a brief second, he came close to me and whispered: "I know exactly how you feel. Man without mysticism is a monster. Don't you think so?" Before I could say anything, he had gone. As I mounted up the stair the music of that Zenlike thrust I bore long after it was heard no more.

That was how I first met Dr. Neihardt. Since then we have met often. Each meeting has brought us closer.

As it happened a few days after Dr. Neihardt was giving a recital of his poems at the Writers' Forum. It was late in the cold evening when a few of us met in the Arts and Science Buildings. Things brightened up a bit when Dr. Neihardt walked in. The brief introduction over, he took the chair, that is he preferred to speak sitting. (When you are eighty you are, I suppose, entitled to do that, talking to students who might be your grandchildren.)

He spoke of his early days by the Solomon river, of the pioneering spirit, his association with the Indians, and how he had once wanted to write on the French Revolution ("in youth we are all revolutionary") and ended up by writing *A Cycle of the West*, an epic on American history.

This evening he would read only a few lyrics. Most young poets perpetrate spring poems, he added wryly. In his own day he too had done a few. Not bad, considering the age. ("Hate to tell you how far back. About half a century, some of these.")

He had once received an urgent telegram from an editor asking him to send an Easter poem. But, he had told his wife, he had no Easter poem in his system. The good lady had asked him to wait for the night instead of sending a refusal rightaway. Then something happened. During the night he dreamt that he was in a dark room full of poets reading their own poems on Easter. Only no one would allow the other to finish! However when, next morning, he sat down to a frugal breakfast the poem 'came'. When he showed it to his wife she, a shrewd judge, said it was the best thing he had done.

Once more the northbound wonder
 Brings back the goose and crane.
 Prophetic Songs of Thunder,
 Apostles of the Rain.

In many a battling river
 The broken gorges boom.
 Behold the Mighty Giver
 Emerges from the tomb!
 Now robins chant the story

Of how the wintry sward
 Is litten with the glory
 Of the Angel of the Lord.

His countenance is lightning
 And still his robe is snow,
 As when the dawn was bright'ning
 Two thousand years ago.
 O who can be a stranger

To what has come to pass?
 The pity of the Manger
 Is mighty in the grass—

Undaunted by Decembers
 The sap is faithful yet.
 The giving Earth remembers
 And only men forget.

• "I can say I like it," said Dr. Neihardt, "because *I* didn't write it. When it is good I don't claim it at all. I have just been faithful. As a child, my mother tells me, I never cried. But when this poem came I shivered, I cried. I could not finish it. But when it was over I wrote 'Thanks'. Today they will no doubt explain all this. Psychology—good word.* Nonsense!"

After a pause, he added: "Love and Pity are the greatest theme. They come back, in spring."

Not everybody thought so. In fact, someone had asked him: What makes you think so? Well, many things, the poet had answered. But take this: treat an animal, before it has learnt to fear, with a little kindness. It overflows

* See "My friend, the Popular Psychologist, is certain of his diagnosis. And he has understood nothing, nothing". Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*, p. 73.

with love. Wherefrom does it get that do you think? Dr. Neihardt had raised his voice just a little. It was a piece of flashing annoyance which made the question living and, for the moment, unanswerable.

He would read another, *April Theology*. "It was pretty pagan and some people got wild with it. It was a magical morning when I wrote it. Things sang." And, almost in a whisper, almost to himself, he said: "Modern poets don't know that poetry is song. Some know. They will one day." Then he started to read the poem and how it leapt into life! As he read it, it sounded more like a hymn than a poem:

Oh to be breathing and hearing
and feeling and seeing!
Oh the ineffably glorious privilege
of being!
All of the world's lovely girlhood,
unfleshed and made
spirit
Broods out in the sunlight this
morning—I see it, I hear it!
So read me no text, O my
brothers, and preach me no
creeds:
I am busy beholding the glory
of God in his deeds!
Out here where the world-love
is flowing, unfettered, un-
priced.
I feel the depth of the man-soul
and girl-heart of Christ!
Mid this riot of pink and white
flame in this miracle weather.
Soul to soul, merged in one, God
and I dream the vast dream
together.
We are one in the doing of
things that are done to be;
I am part of my God as a rain-drop
is part of the sea!

He then turned to a lyric sequence celebrating the mystery of birth, the birth of his eldest daughter. This interested me, for a few days before I had permitted myself the sage observation that the Orientals seemed to have the secret of the symbolic imagination which the moderns, as a rule, lack. Also, elsewhere, I had said that Mystery was perhaps the ultimate value in Tagore's poetry. So I was eager to hear the series (a little like Sarojini Naidu, I thought, after I had heard it).

Soon shall you come as the
dawn from the dumb abyssm
of night,
Traveller birthward, Hastener
earthward out of the gloom '
Soon shall you rest on a soft
white breast from the measureless
midworld flight ;
Waken in fear at the miracle,
light, in the pain-hushed
room.
Who shall unravel your tangle
of travel uncertain your
history ?
Latent in juices the April sun
loosens from capture,
Have you not blown in the lily
and grown in the weed ? . .
For ancient and new, you are
flame, you are dust, you are
spirit and dew,
Swirled into flesh, and the winds
of the world are your breath !
The song of a thrush in the hush
of the dawn is not younger
than you--
And yet you are older than
death !

There was something more than poetic fancy in all this, there was in it a note of cosmic wonder, a note which today

the poet's tongue has almost forgotten or lost the secret. "But when the baby came," continued the poet turned father, "I wanted a good gift for it I wanted to give it an awareness of the best that men have thought and felt" That is how *Heritage* came to be written :

Oh, there are those, a sordid
clan,
With pride in gaud and faith
in gold
Who prize the sacred soul of
man
For what his hands have sold
And these shall deem thee
humbly bled
They shall not hear, they shall
not see
The kings among the lordly
dead
Who walk and talk with thee '
With Eld thy chain of days is
one
The seas are still Homeric seas ,
The sky shall glow with
Pindar's sun
The stars of Socrates '
The glory of the search of God
Be thine in life and death '
The torch my fathers gave in
trust,
Thy father gives to thee '

He was feeling remniscent and spoke how one of his poems, *Let Me Live Out My Years*, had sustained some of his readers for years It was a young man's poem, he said. He no longer felt the same way about death It was no longer a "grisly Thing " And he read it :

Let me live out my years in
heat of blood '
Let me die drunken with the
dreamer's wine '
Let me not see this soul-house
built of mud
Go toppling to the dust—a
vacant shrine !

Let me go quickly like a candle
 light
 Snuffed out just at the heyday
 of its glow '
 Give me high noon— and let it
 then be night '
 Thus would I go
 And grant me, when I face the
 grisly Thing,
 One haughty cry to pierce the
 gray Perhaps '
 Let me be as a tune-swept
 fiddlestring
 That feels the Master Melody -
 and snaps

And there it snapped. He had stopped. It took a few seconds to break the spell, the "high noon" that he had brought into the cold cell. Then young, eager voices fluted compliments, a gentle rain of praise and thanksgiving. Discovering me in the crowd he threw a question: How did you like it? It was like a ritual, I said, honestly.

Then we went upstairs for coffee, and talked about haiku (which along with Zen seems to be a craze), beauty, poetry, technique and twenty other things. Later when I got him alone I asked him a few questions to which he replied readily.

"What do you think of our modern poets?" I asked him.

"I am disappointed with their lack of song, of ecstatic vision, and I question much of what they call modern."

"What do you think poetry is really trying to do?"

"Poetry is a means of communicating experiences of a spiritual and aesthetic nature from a higher level of consciousness than what most people normally live in," he answered.

"Is heroism outmoded?"

"When you put men to the test, they will be heroic. The human spirit is heroic. You put it to the test and you will see. You bet. The human spirit transcends the body."

You know what Crazy Horse said when he went to battle :
It is a good day to die !"

"If you had one boon to ask, what would you ask ?"

"I'd have to think. For myself I would perhaps not ask anything. It is no good, in the last analysis." (Then he put the same question to me. "I would like to share the game," I said. "Well, I have done that long enough", he replied with a smile, "Willing to go too." Which brought me to my last question.)

"Dr. Neihardt, if and when you go to India what are you expecting to do there ?"

"I want to meet some of the yogis and swamis. I shall be friendly with them, and sit at their feet in humility and understanding."

He sure will be welcome. As one of the tribe.

POETIC VALUES

It will be seen that by the term "poetic values" I refer to something more important than a literary form. Most of the things I have to say on the subject have been said, in some form or another, at some time or the other. But, so far as I know, they have not been said together and related for the present purpose. The view I take of the human consciousness is as old as the Upanishads and as new as modern psychology. Were it merely old I would not have taken it.

Perhaps most people today would regard any discussion of reality as a waste of time. But our conception of value by which we live, must grow out of our genuine belief as to what is real. Hence a certain discussion of principles, into oft forgotten facts, will be necessary and unavoidable.

Let me begin with a fact of everyday experience. Everyone has heard the phrase, "Well, there's more truth than poetry in that". I myself have heard it used in the lower as well as some of the higher and more frosty social and intellectual latitudes, and I propose to examine this particular stop-gap for intellectual vacuity by way of approach to my theme. The general mind, untroubled by the difficulties of definition, means by truth of course common sense. The extreme devotees of such truth are likely to be loud in the praise of their own practicality. You cannot fool them, for they know their world. The five senses are infallible and money-getting (another fact) assumes the characteristics of fanatical religious passion. But as we can see the prevailing psychosis as to the supreme importance of

Adapted from a book, with the same title, by John Nelhardt.

material things is of recent origin. No well-developed religious passion lacks for long the sanction of authority. In this case the sanction of an infallible authority has been furnished, by physical science. Or so it used to be thought.

It is at this point that our catch phrase, "more truth than poetry", really begins to trouble us unpractical people who believe in poetic values. For, says common sense, science has found no field of reality to which we may relate our so-called values. We devotees of the poetic are in a sad position indeed. Physical science has searched the cosmos, and has not found the trace of soul anywhere. And though some poets manage to compromise, entertain or mystify, and have even bank balances, this is not what we means, and what we are after, when we talk of poetic values. We do not want poetry as a *reality-killer*. It is not less reality that we want, but more. We insist that our values are as real as any other, and they must be regarded as actually integral in any sane scheme of human life, for reasons that will appear.

Thus we arouse an old antagonism. So deeply is it rooted in human nature that it has divided our world geographically into temperamental hemispheres, and "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet". A number of years ago a Hindu Brahmin spent a night and day with me. We did not meet as strangers and easily wrestled into the small hours, he taking the Oriental subjective view of the world and I, for the sake of argument, the Occidental, the objective view as we like to think of it. But I am convinced I was wrong, and that mine was no more than a patriotic defence.

But, I think, the livable truth has probably escaped both of us. Poetic values must qualify for existence and respect in a crude, empirical world. If it cannot be shown that they are real values in the world of struggling men, then they may be values for archangels, but not for us. Neither extreme materialism nor extreme idealism will serve our purpose. Somewhere there must be a region where a practical synthetic realism is possible. This is what we must find out.

What I think we need to take from the East is its idea,

that is experience of various stages or stations of consciousness: the waking, the dream state, and the state of deep sleep. There is also a fourth (*turiya*) but we cannot consider it, since there is nothing in our experience to which it corresponds.

Offer this idealistic doctrine to a matter-of-fact Westerner, and he will demolish it with laughter, for he knows well what things are real, he does. I cannot but sympathise with the strictly common-sense man. But I also agree with my Brahmin friend that to regard it as the whole is truly an illusion. I cannot however go the whole way with him—towards the Absolute—so far from the dear prejudice that is our home. Frankly, we cannot begin with an infinite or an absolute conception; there just is nothing in our experience to correspond to infinity. In fact, we have not gone far with finite understanding yet, considering the fact that we don't know how to live decently with each other.

We must therefore begin with what we can agree to call known and here modern psychology comes to our aid. We Occidentals habitually act upon the unconsidered conviction that there is only one valid state—the ordinary waking state. But who does not know that our world is very largely subjective? Who has not felt a familiar landscape go strange, though every hill and tree and valley remained the same as of old? The pain of loss may change the very look of one's home, until the once friendly lilac bush on the lawn becomes a stranger. For we realize things through our sense of relations, and a change of consciousness is a shifting of the focus of attention.

The fact of expansive or subliminal consciousness has been investigated and established in different ways, by Myers, James, Freud, Jung and others, and corresponds to the essential Vedantic conception. All the world that we know or can know is to be known through our consciousness of relations. Since human consciousness is expansive, we may be certain that a single state cannot include all humanly knowable relations, that the wider the range of relations we

know, the larger shall be our effective world. The synthetic view would be the thing to strive for.

We may now apply the fact of expansive consciousness to physical science, which is the prevailing dogma and the method by which relations of the common-sense waking state are apprehended to the exclusion of all other possible relations. The attitude is old but as scientific materialism it is the theory that the universe could be explained in terms of matter and motion. Anything not physical would not be real, and the term physical meant the substance of the common-sense world as known to the waking state.

Science would be wholly objective in its method. But was such a thing ever possible? For the process by which sense perception becomes idea is still a mystery. But science has to begin somewhere and so it did. It needed one fact upon which it—and all else—could depend. Matter in motion was that fact.

And it remains true that for the state in which men, as mere animals, beget and are born, eat, drink, toil and die this system of relations is actual, and the penalty of denial is not to be denied. The error of the dogmatic materialist lies in the assumption of a single, unshifting focus of attention, a single constant state of awareness, limited to that one set of relations with which animal existence is concerned.

But how are we to explain its success? "The real," said Planck, "is that which can be measured." Science described the appearances, greatly extended their range within the limits of the exclusive view, sought for relations between them and for principles of recurrence whereby other appearances might be predicted. And this being done with strict reference to one state, the one focus of attention to which such appearances belonged, it is easy to see why the theory triumphed as it did. The fact that it worked does not, however, prove that the conception was universally correct, as the scientists know. But no thinker will be sorry for the fact that triumph it did. For the state of our animal activity was in a sorry mess indeed. Men were profoundly impressed by the young giant and his miracle-working power. Nature

is tamed, or so we think. We can talk to each other across seas and continents, but the gabble of a goose will travel as rapidly as the syllables of a seer. It is altogether possible to live the ethical life of a swine while enjoying all the vaunted blessings of materialistic science. We know this is true because it is being done on a vast scale with conspicuous success. Science having failed to discern the soul the body is all. (But, thanks to a barbaric social system, there is a periodic disposal of human bodies by strictly scientific methods.) Because of its apparent triumph, what science has *not* proved is widely taken to be false or doubtful. As theory follows theory each hypothesis is treated like a new revelation, such is the hypnosis of infallible authority. This blind faith in a single way of thinking that automatically limits reality to the sensible plane, operates to reassure the brute instincts and tends to limit the whole scale of recognized values to the economic realm. It is fortunately true that there is a vast amount of haphazard kindness in the world, for without it as a mitigating circumstance we could not live at all. But all the kindness in the world is practically futile so long as it operates within, and in keeping with, the prevailing view of life.

I am merely insisting on the obvious, on the fact of our confinement into a single focus of attention and the fact of an ascending scale of consciousness. If the fact were given any practical significance, it would not be considered possible to educate a human being on one level only—and more and more just that is being done. Our institutions, to which we once looked for leadership on the higher levels, now seem all but powerless to help. For the great hypnosis grips them too. "Make us more efficient," cry the barbaric horde of students, "that we may hope to glut ourselves on the rich troughs of the world". It is a pitiful cry. It is a common thing nowadays to hear of the cash value of "an education". I have met many teachers in many schools and colleges who seemed to be worried about it. A great deal of adverse criticism is being heaped upon our schools. What the critics should do is to attack the materialistic psychosis of society.

Meanwhile it is possible for the superior student to question as to whether or not a life spent in getting a living is worth a single pang of longing.

Seriously, we must consider a change of attitude. Some idea of such a transformation may be given by citing the similar example of the changing cube. The synthetic realist will see the cube living in all its relations.

How is the movement to be started in the direction of such a social conception? By thinking about it first. Certainly not by passing laws. Perhaps we may have to wait for economic processes to reach that point of negation and consequent catastrophe which seems inevitable in our fragmentary conception of Man. Perhaps there is hope in the fact that many grow weary of the establishment. But this is something more than a matter of scholarship or sophistication; for a man might have a systematic knowledge of all value-forms without vitalising any but those of the lower range. It is also a fact that learning displays a strong tendency to be negative. Mere scholarship will not do.

Perhaps the most compelling hope, when we come to think of it, is to be found in the present trend of scientific theory. Already the scientific materialist has been able to establish a wave-like motion of light as a working conception. The idea of motion in nothing has been approached, whereas in the past motion in matter was the prime essential. Hence a something called ether was invented. So long as there was matter to cling to, it was possible to ignore all phenomenon that could not, apparently, be described as physical in any accepted sense. Orthodox science has done that and is still doing it. It has clung to its original negative assumption, refusing to consider all phenomena apparently related to the mystery of human personality, limiting its psychology to pure mechanism, and even seeking the origin of mind in muscular reactions.

There are two generally accepted directions in which the fleeting shadow of truth may be pursued across the plane of awareness which is concerned with our ordinary world of

animal existence—towards the very, very large and towards the very, very small. Proceeding in the direction of the inconceivably small science has arrived, unexpectedly, at a new conception of the atom, which turns out to be a form of motion. Matter has disappeared and motion remains. Motion in what? Ether, universal ether, say Thompson and Russell. Surely this is getting rather far from common sense. In the end, it seems, the unknown is fundamental after all.

But science has also proceeded in the direction of the inconceivably large, and has come by logical experiment to the principle of relativity. The traditional conceptions of space and time are not, and what we have of the materialistic universe is merely an electro-magnetic field in a vacuum. We must be careful not to picture it as matter, warns an expert, Schlick, and he should know. As a result the state of uncertainty and even 'irrationality' is in the air. As Eddington said: "A real law of nature is likely to stand out by the fact that it appears to us irrational, since in that case it is less likely that we have invented it to satisfy our intellectual taste." Surely science has travelled far from common sense.

If it be true that the human consciousness is expansive—and this is hardly to be doubted so long as seers and dolts exist together—then it is necessary to infer that the wider state will include the more. Does it not seem that truly a very different order of ideas is needed? So, why not explore human personality and get acquainted with the Knower? Should not science, at an advanced state, become the science of human personality? and the rest of specialised knowledge take a back seat, to be ordered by the higher and central intelligence? And what could be the justification of seeking to know at all? Nothing but the exploration of human consciousness. Somehow our salvation is within us. There is hope for poetry still.

By its very technique, suitably altered, and authority on the lower level science might yet revolutionize the whole life of man, the science of man, which alone can justify our

presence in the world in the direction of higher values. The science would surely be more than psychology, as we use the word, for its purpose would be to enlarge the world qualitatively as well as quantitatively. The gap is represented by the present state of physics and psychology. A solution of this problem would not perhaps give us an ultimate conception of the universe, but would tend to establish the unbroken relationship between the chain of Being.

It is not to be assumed that anyone can predict just what the new science will find, but enough is known to justify the belief that the old hopelessly limiting notions will be destroyed and with them sooner or later, will go the hideous superstition that we call materialism and its corollary individualism. Then will be the time for poetry.

Has science in its farther reaches crossed the boundaries of art? I give you an example. Fancy yourself in a forest, as a woodchopper. Suddenly, if you are a certain sort of a person, the tree fades away. With a timeless sense, in which the very identity of the woodchopper is lost, you may feel the ecstatic upward suck of resurrected life through the bole and branch and twig, almost as though the body of the tree were your own. You have felt the larger relations and lost yourself in them. And it is not only when in contact with what we call nature that such a swift change may occur. It may happen anywhere, in crowded streets. Here too the sense of love and loss of self may occur. It is the cube turning inside out, it is the scientific mood passing without a shock into the poetic.

I have read of these ultra-modern scientific theories in no carping spirit. Should we not rather rejoice to believe that the old notion of antagonism is an illusion and that both the scientific and the poetic belong to one flowing circle of *human* reality? And if this be poetry, what is its theme but the ancient longing to know—always essaying an infinite journey and always returning upon itself?

II

THE CREATIVE DREAM

It must have been noted that in using the word poetry I could not have been thinking of that particular literary form which we ordinarily contrast with prose. The definition of poetry must be psychological. Of the four arts, sculpture, painting, poetry and music, sculpture is that one which seems to exist wholly in the common-sense world. In painting one of the dimensions of the common-sense world is lost. Only length and breadth remain. Poetry cannot be said to have either length or breadth or thickness. This art must be largely-believe, say the believers in common-sense. No wonder some of the poets, impractical fellows, starved to death.

Our official aesthetician, the butcher, looks at poetry, takes snuff, let us say the *Hubb* and treats it as childish history. And when the literary critic tells him that "Homer is a poet for all ages, all race, and all moods." To the Greeks his epics were not only the best of romances, they were also their Bible. He is the "second-sighted man", he is unimpressed. Surely these poets and lovers of poetry are sometimes out of their senses; this is what he thinks, glad to be out of it. What he feels is true, as we shall see, but for reasons unknown to the butcher.

We now come to music, the last in our scale of arts. What is its subject matter? Or can it be that music has no content that is describable in terms of the real? Since it is scientific to believe only in a world made wholly of such stuff as hams and Ford cars are made of, and superstitious to believe in any other sort of world, it looks as though the butcher might be compelled to part company with music, though he had loved it once, and brought a phonograph too. Now if we should ask the butcher why he likes music, he would probably find himself at a loss to give an answer. But if we should ask, "Does it somehow seem to lift you out of yourself?" he would perhaps agree that it seemed to do that. And this is true of all our aesthetic experience,

and may be likened to the word of our Brahmin friend, to the merging of the land-top with the sea. In the higher reaches aesthetic experience brings a sense of freedom and understanding, however brief, and that sadness which we call beauty.

Though we have arranged the arts in a kind of hierarchical system of materiality and immateriality, in all these arts we are neither going up nor down. What we are really doing is moving away. Away from what and how? This brings us to what we shall call the creative dream.

The phrase "creative dream" seems to involve a damaging admission. This is due to our absorption with the standardized waking conception of the world. But no one, after a little thought, will contend that we are aware of all that exists. The very idea of education implies the expansion of consciousness to include a larger representation of the world. That is, it is possible to be aware of more relations, and to be aware in different ways. But so long as we are men, and not archangels, the validity of any unusual state of consciousness must be judged by the possible effect of its alleged values upon the lives of men. And this is the test that Art must be willing to undergo. But if two given foci of attention vary widely enough each will appear to the other as a dream, unless the fact of expansive consciousness be understood and an attempt be made to correlate the values thereof. It is in this sense that artists can be called dreamers and in no other.

In the process of appreciating any work of art, the appreciator undergoes a change of consciousness, approximating that which took place in the producing artist. And in its complete form the appreciation of a truly great work of art would necessarily take on the characteristics of a dream—dream being the term whereby two widely differing fields of attention may describe each other. The creative dream is the process of reconstructing the ordinary representation of the world in keeping with an expanded view of it: a creative fusing of two views of the world, each of which would seem to the other like a dream. And that which is

added to the narrower standardized conception of the world by this process is poetry.

It is to be deplored that the world has passed through a bath of the multitude and lost its meaning. To prettify, to ornament and distort with make-believe, is to be poetic, and the poetic poet, in the vulgar sense of the term, is an abomination to poets. But, if we like, poetic can mean *poetic* to us, and its meaning will in no way approach that of the word ornamental. Also its meaning for us will be psychological rather than literary. An artist, we may say, is one whose habit is to view the world from the vantage point of states more or less removed from the standardized state of ordinary living, and who has a special technique for representing the wider experience by fusion with the narrower, to the end that his vision may be shared.

An analogy might help. Imagine a valley surrounded by lofty mountains. There are some sleepwalkers who manage to ascend the steps while other men are deep in lumber. They see a different sight but each finds trouble in describing what he has seen or dreamt, for language has been developed to meet the need of those who have never left the valley. Accordingly, through the ages, the sleepwalkers have developed new languages, new techniques, whereby it may be possible to re-create in the minds of the valley men some semblance of the vision of the height. The effect of the message thus delivered is always to set the general above the particular, to emphasize the larger relations, to merge the needful self in the whole. Art here blends with ethics as, in its origin, it is one with religion, which may be looked upon as an art form, intended as the medium of this same passionate desire for loss of self in the greater process of which we are all a part.

The analogy was intended to convey that the standardized vision of the world is not the only possible one. But the valley-dwellers themselves do not always stick to it and there are now and then greater or less shifts in the realizing focus of the self. This is when people seem "queer." Very many, without any knowledge, live, to some extent, the

life of the artist. For man is the artist animal. In proportion as he utilizes in the standard animal realm the values to be perceived only by the characteristic process of art he is raised, in the qualitative sense, above the status of the brute.

We may assume that all the materials utilized by the poet are found in the standardized world, though one who is familiar with the greatest poetry may sometimes be persuaded to think otherwise. But, suddenly, the light spreads about the object of regard, and in proportion as it spreads areas of hitherto hidden meaning are illumined as in a dream; relations normally concealed are suspected or revealed as in a vision. Here in this wild and ecstatic widening of consciousness regard that the substance of the poem is conceived, and the substance of it is concerned with the larger relations that are revealed. It is as though instead of a lantern we had the true light of lightning.

Modern psychology has shown that man's field of consciousness extends beyond the immediate spot. Call it the outer field (the phrase that we shall use here), the "abliminal" or the "ultra-marginal consciousness", the "un-conscious" or "over-belief", what you will. It has been shown that this outer field is fundamental and primitive, its processes are concerned not with words or ideas, but images, not with logic but with analogies and the images tend to be generic, and that the sense of time and space drop away as in the dream state or creative thinking. The poet may sometimes view experience from the vantage point of the wider field. Sometimes the two may be close enough, as in popular poetry; at times the difference may be pretty wide, as in much of Shelley's work. The new vision cannot be stated in the old language, a sense of it must be induced and this means a novel use of language which, paradoxically, may be lost in some earlier forgotten symbolism. A good deal of minor poetry is close enough to the conventional standardized universe of experience. On the other hand, major poetry is produced in the further reaches of the outer field, so distant from the standard spot, and the poetic process takes place in human depths.

That yield no foam to any squall of change

Anyone who loves poetry truly has noted that a great line or passage seems old. The reason is that which, in its origin, was unassociated with time cannot but seem old when the time sense is applied to it. It is because human life is vexed with endless change that the relative substitutes of art are precious to us. Every life, viewed from the narrow world of sense, is a pathetic affair. Indeed, how can it be justified in terms of the local and the individual and the community? What but the vision that is of art can reveal the impersonal victory that is wrought of all these numberless little individual defeats? Poetry is a means of communication between the stable and universal background of human personality and the flowing background of the individual. The value of a poem is in proportion to the largeness of the mood that it is capable of creating in the properly sensitive recipient. This explains why it is possible to give intensive technical study to poetry without experiencing that profound change which it is the function of art to produce.

The revealing mood, if it could last, would make saints of men. A man living wholly with reference to the wider awareness might not live for long for obvious reasons. Nearly two thousand years ago there was a supreme artist whose life, lived creatively in accordance with a super-brutal vision, remains a tragic masterpiece of beauty and power. It is because the poet is incapable of such a life that he is a poet at all. When the revealing moment has passed, the backward swoop of the sensible fact will be like a sickness, and in most great art something of this is found to be inseparable from beauty.

In general our poetic criticism is prone to miss the large mood which is architectural, placing undue emphasis upon minor inspirations concerned with technical detail. That the mood of what we called the major inspiration—the vitalizing mood of the whole—is the matter of fundamental importance, can be demonstrated by merely naming a few great poems. Say *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* or *Lear* or *Agamemnon* or *Oedipus* and we are moved by a quick awareness of something power-

ful and beautiful in a large and wordless sense. That mood is concerned directly with the fundamental greatness of the poem. But though the fundamental greatness of a poem is commensurate with the mood of the whole, yet to be valued it must be shared, and the process of sharing, of translating the mood may be a gruelling task. It would seem however that a forthright bareness may serve the purpose better than excessive richness in detail. Yet it is detail that is more commonly noted in our time of much analysis and little synthesis. Walter de la Mare's well-known lyric, 'The Listeners', serves to show how powerful a single mood can be built without any richness of detail and cumulatively contribute to the production of an overpowering sense of regret and heartache and loneliness.

"Is there anybody there ?" said the Traveller
Knocking at the moonlit door,
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor
And a bird flew up out of the turret
Above the Traveller's head
And he smote upon the door a second time
"Is there anybody there ?" he said

The appreciation of the point we have been noting is apparent to anyone who has been called upon to read much verse produced by the average tyro. The fatal fact about the average tyro is that he has not for a moment conceived the material outside the standardized field of sense, and he is imitating that special aspect of poetry which is concerned necessarily with the specialized field. He simply has nothing to convey that is not of the standard field.

Assuming, in any case, an authentic mood to be conveyed poets may differ greatly in their character of that about which the mood is cast, in their method of translation, and in the degree of success. In Blake, for instance, we have a striking example of inability to represent the outer view in terms of the standard view. But after all differences are noted, there will remain a fundamental likeness among poets, and capable critics, of which there never has been much.

must be concerned with the identification of that something which relates the latest authentic poet with the earliest. It is the same line, the same news, an abiding awareness of wider relations which alone can make life other than the outrageous indignity it must seem

Not only is poetry autogeneous in every poet ; it is also inevitable in the very nature of expansive human consciousness, though certain times and societies will favour its emergence in art while others will determine other creative outlets for the faculty. Even when men are constrained to act, as in the business of life they must, they do so creatively in their degree and manner. In *The Gambler* Dostoevsky describes the characteristic state as experienced by a heavy winner at the roulette. We mention these facts to emphasize the fact that the creative dream is inevitable in human consciousness, whether the result be act or art. If this fact were better understood by critics we should not be hearing the dreary old assertion that poetry is of the past and that men are now too wisely practical to produce great poets. Before the Great War one heard the same sort of thing about heroism. Professor Prescott in his generally admirable and illuminating study, *The Poetic Mind*, falls into the old dreary error. He says "The real difficulty is that, as we no longer have the imagination to write poetry, we lack even the imagination to read it. The age of poetry is gone." Now poetry has always been dead according to the Prescotts of the moment. They simply do not know, as the history of criticism proves. Effective criticism must be concerned, first of all, with the recognition of that in all poets which is fundamentally identical. Criticism is not and cannot be a matter of factual knowledge, of formula ; it is altogether a matter of the development of the poetic consciousness in the critic. The judgment must be within the mood of the poem considered, and no amount of judging from the outside will be of the slightest use. Criticism of poetry in this fundamental and necessary sense cannot be taught. One might as well attempt a study of saintliness from its manifestations by way of becoming a saint.

Professor Prescott's assumption, at variance with the fact, is: Men have become scientific in their attitude. Science is matter of fact, whereas poetry is the imagination. But without imagination modern science would have been impossible. So obvious is this that in its higher reaches it approximates the poetical. Furthermore, when and for what reason did the outer field of human consciousness, itself a fact of science, suddenly become inoperative in man? We must think of imagination, in this connection, not as unreality but as a wider revelation of reality through a supersensible awareness of larger relations. The error in criticism of poetry here emphasized is a social error with profound ethical consequences. We must realise that there is a wide range of valid states of consciousness; that expanded consciousness is not a matter of imagination in the sense of unreality, but in a sense by which alone it is possible to live humanly. The whole man must be the whole of his conscious field. We are generally far less than half men in our normal relations and our materialistic society exists in a very small fraction of the humanly realizable world.

The technique of art is the technique of extended attention, realizable through larger relations. Its values are fundamental ethical values, without which there can be no genuine education. To regard the arts as merely entertaining, or as a means of escape from reality, is to miss the point utterly. But all values are interdependent. To ignore the higher is to have no human justification for the lower; and to deny the lower is to have nothing upon which the higher may act.

It is only in the narrow standard field that men differ hopelessly. As the outer field is penetrated, differences drop away. Art becomes the one universal means of communication. The art consciousness alone can identify men. The process of identification is the creative dream, the loss of self in a wider regard of the object.

In all this we are, of course, not concerned with "Art for Art's sake". We do not believe that even the greatest poetry is important in itself. Life itself is everything and both art

and science are merely strategic methods by which men may live more fully. If art is not concerned with the actual revelation of a wider world, then let men seek momentary forgetfulness by cheaper means. But there is no justification for despair. Young as we are on this planet, and terrible as has been our experience, we have succeeded in evolving super-brutal values that can save us whenever they shall come into practical use, and those values grow out of the wider visioning that results in art. What then, from our viewpoint, shall we hope for men—that they will all become artists? Or hope for a system of education that will introduce all men, in so far as the capacity exists in each, into the realm of those values we have been discussing? Such an education would mean a world in which the sense-bound mass would be shepherded by men of the wider awareness. The fact that a recognizable approximation once existed briefly in Athens should give some substance to the hope. The world has not always been insanely desirous of material things and will not always be so. There is a widespread yearning for the "More" of which James spoke; and scientific heresy in the realm of psychic research is a healthy sign, whatever may come out of it.

In the meanwhile our schools are designed to produce fractional men by the million, and the emphasis of life is placed on the extreme lower range of humanly realisable values. With the prevailing conception of Man, how can we hope to live humanly together? We have not been greatly changed by all the formal creeds of all the centuries of dogmatic strife; for a creed runs readily on the lips and may signify no change of consciousness of him who repeats it. Only by the general widening of the conscious field* in which men act can we hope to live down our animal ancestry and set up standards of value that are human. Only by the systematic stimulation of the art of consciousness in men and its application to the problems of society can we hope to be saved from ourselves. We have within us the means of our salvation. Let the dreamers of the world unite.

* *Chitta-vistara* of Indian aesthetics

THE QUEST ETERNAL

Very few know that in 1936, two years before his passing away, the philosopher Brajendranath Seal (1864-1938) had published a strange poem with that title. The poem, in three parts, is a kind of testament, a Synthetic Vision, *Sehnsucht*, characteristic of a colossal contemporary trying hard to fuse the three times, to write what he called "the symphony of ages". A curiosity of literature, the *Quest* is an astounding, if largely forgotten work. A "challenge thrown by the artist to his age", it has long been out of print—perhaps in its own way a sufficient comment. But in an unbiassed account of the poem one cannot but marvel at the range of interest and ideological immensity which make modern giants look like pigmies. The first two parts of the poem—The Ancient and Medieval Quests—were completed as early as 1893. The last—the Modern Ideal—was more recent and must have taken longer to work out.

Without doubt Brajendranath was aware of the unusualness of his undertaking. He guards himself suitably, to prevent likely misunderstanding. In the Preface and Appendix he has, mercifully, explained some of his intentions which make the task of the unwary critic, in treading through the mythic maze, a little easier. The author is aware, writes the philosophic poet, "that the expression of the philosophical temperament, and still more, of philosophical ideas of life and the world, in forms of pure poetry" is somewhat of an experiment in which "not lyrical intensity or *furor*, but the poise and balance of reason and imagination, of historical reality and universal ideality is the complex effect which has been aimed at". Aimed at, but how far has

this been achieved? That is a question the reader must decide for himself.

He goes on to say that "the norm and test of poetry" is "the creation of a personality with an individual scheme of life". The scheme of life, noble and syncretic, is no doubt there but whether the poem creates or provides a personality it is hard to say. In none of the three parts of the poem does the shadowy protagonist or hero strike us as being "representative of Humanity". The quest is really a soliloquy, of an attitude, much the same throughout.

As for the verse it displays, he tells us, "an austere economy even to baldness", but baldness broken by continuous apostrophising and interrogations. It is a little strange that the philosopher rarely writes philosophically. As a rule he prefers the dithyrambic chant, a frankly monotonous medium.

• What about the *mise en scene*? For his cosmorama—the modern, near-American phrase is Brajendranath's own coinage—he chooses the fusion-points of different races and civilization at their passing which, in his view, explain the transition to the next succeeding age, the whole thing always *viewed from the standpoint of the living problem of today*, or so the poet tells us.

For instance, in the first book or part—"The Passing of the Ancient Ideal"—an Ancient Hymn, supposed to be uttered by a priest who has travelled in the East, the imagined background is half-Greek half-Oriental. The second book—"The Passing of the Medieval Ideal"—comes in for a more detailed explanation, typical of encyclopaedist Brajendranath's somewhat Teutonic *tika*. In "the Rime of the Wizard Knight," the hero of the tale or quest, "the author has chosen for central figure a knight-errant, who is represented to have been a disciple, not of the Catholic hierarchy, but of the Platonic, Syrian and Magian Mystical Brotherhoods. Indeed, the great rationalistic movement from the Mutazilas of the eighth and ninth centuries to the Sincere Brethren (*Ikhwanus-Safa*) and other Seekers of Truth such as the encyclopaedists of the tenth and eleventh centuries, together with the revival of

Syrian Neo-Platonism and probably the old Magian Wisdom, made for a type of medieval culture in the Eurasian borderlands which was as distinctly opposed to the medieval Catholic type as Gnosticism and Mithraism had, a thousand years before, been opposed to primitive Christianity ; and the author has attempted to restore this lost world and portray it allusively round the central figure of the Wizard Knight from such scattered hints and remnants as are now available." Noble aim, putting together forgotten fragments of lost wisdom, but the reader suspects that with such heavy expository cargo the poem is likely to sink.

In the third book—"The Modern Ideal"—no such composite setting has been necessary. For background we have only the "outstanding fact of our age, the contact and conflict between so-called civilized and primitive life". Thus far the Preamble, or the ground plan of the poem. Obviously he had thought much over the theme and technique. His *manasputra*, intellectual child, was not born in a day, but had a long gestation.

As if the Preface were not enough Brajendranath offers more guidance in the Appendix, where he points to the parallelisms and common motifs among the three ideals. This is a piece of remarkable exegesis which a less intellectually trained mind might otherwise miss. Ten in number, the parallelisms and common motifs he isolates and emphasizes are :

the Vision of the Ideal, embodied in some concrete cosmic symbol—the Vision of Urania in the old days, as *Natura* in the medieval worldview and as Psyche-Urania in the modern ;

the Birth of the Godhead, natural in the ancient days, supernatural in the medieval, emergent in the modern ;

the Passion of the World-Drama, as part of mystery in the ancient, as blind in the medieval, as the 'World-Passion of Creative Deity' in the modern ;

the Great Illusion as the Siren of the Ancient Skies, as a background of silent mockery in the medieval, in the modern ideal as the Siren *and* Psyche ;

the Dance of Love, as *Maya* in the ancient and medieval, as the Masque of Love, in the modern ;

the World-wanderer or Super-tramp (a 'modern' touch there), in the ancient hymn the wanderlust is kept in the background, in the medieval quest the knight speaks of his travels in 'in desert Media, Mizraim, Rum', in the modern quest the hero is a homeless wanderer (Mr Kerouac to note) ;

the Curse, from which the ancient ideal is free, in the medieval the Curse is on the Wizard Knight, in the modern it is Psyche's lot and vicariously of every soul engaged in the old, old search of Heaven and Earth and Hell ;

the Deliverance, is not a conscious theme in the ancient days, in the medieval ideal the knight can save others but not himself, in the modern Psyche conquers death through world-experience, Death is conquered by dying (not very convincing, perhaps) ;

* Mother Earth, in the ancient days she is the Mighty Mother, in the medieval the nymphs and fays are her progeny, in the modern she is the Virgin Goddess ;

Finally, the Quest Eternal—the two hunts, in the ancient she is Ashtoreth, while in the medieval world the hunters ride across a haunted wood, in the modern quest the hero is visited in a dream and reverie by Magian, Manichee and Mithraist, but there is also the Hunt of Death and the passion for a Wisdom to master Death. There is in the end the hint of a redeemed humanity.

The Quest Eternal, it is needless to say, is the Quest of the Ideal, which can change but cannot die. So much for exposition. No one can deny that the poem is intellectually well planned, that it has the fundamental brainwork behind it, perhaps more than is good for the poem's health. If a poem were but a superstructure built on the basis of ideas *The Quest Eternal* would have been assured of its place as an outstanding product of our complex age. How explain the neglect and obscurity, its lack of impact ?

But a poem is not written with ideas, not even with words. Unless there is a poetic passion or vision it comes to nothing. Also it must grow from within and have the

essential unity of growth. Brajendranath has carefully *thought out* his poem with an astuteness that major poets might envy but have generally done without. Brajendranath did not write for illiterates. A disciplined and oecumenical thinker, he displays an intellectual range that easily reminds of, if it does not surpass, Lucretius, Dante, Goethe and Kazantzakis. No other Indian, except perhaps Sri Aurobindo, has the same sweep. But it is his intellect, on which he depends so much, both by habit and training, that proves to be the poem's undoing. The poem has logic of thought rather than of imagination. Because of this nothing-but-cerebration the poem is neither drama, nor allegory, nor exactly symbol, even if it deals with symbols. It is really little more than a recluse's subjective phantasmagoria :

And oft in soul-storm. . . .

Visions in tumbling tides coursed through my brain. . . .

I seemed to grow into the world ; within me

Repassed the Ages, ghostly mockery. . . .

At best an artificial chant, here is international, syncretic, mythologizing, Hegelian-Vedantic-Whitmanesque (but an encyclopaedist *philosophe*) "deep-versed student", Brajendranath Seal. The poem has more of *Götterdämmerung* than the dawn of a new myth, it is more an epitaph than a new birth. After all, how can a solitary express the passion of humanity, especially one for whom ideas act as substitute for experience? Brajendranath had plenty of natural elevation, he was easily drawn to the cosmic, synoptic view but he had no truly mythopoeic gift or imagination. A *mélange* or assorted list of Indo-Hellenic deities does duty for the genuine mythic vision. If it were that easy, a Larousse or Lamprière might do as well. Brajendranath frequently falls into this trap or trick, perhaps excusable in the young but it is not the genuine article :

Thy storied apparitions, who shall tell, O Mald !

Asura-vimohini.

Uma, Usha, Urvashi,

Ashtoreth, Proserpina,

Aphrodite, Helena. . . .

Or,

Art Thou the Prima Mater,
 Mother of Heaven and Earth ?
Adya-Shakti, Prakriti,
 Or timeless, spaceless Aditi,
 Witness of Time's birth ?
 Or wouldst Thou rather Magna Mater,
 Mother of Gods and men,
 Ops, Demeter, Semele,
 Isis, Ceres, Cybele,
 Teeming Mother Earth !

From all this over-intellectualised, schematic but easy apostrophising it is a relief to turn to a passage like this :

I was one with the woods ; my body, the Earth ;
 I budded in the buds, and burgeoned fresh
 In the green shoots ; the tendrils were my veins ;
 My eyes blossomed in every bush ; my arms
 Waved in the tall spiked grass ; in the white fog
 The hill-side breathed with me ; the twirling leaves
 Vibrated through the pores of my own skin ;
 I was one with the woods ; my body, the Earth.

But such passages are rare, exceptions rather than the rule. By and large the poem lacks flesh and blood. Not only is the hero quite a shadowy figure, even "the savage ritual of the omophagic sacrifice" that claims his beloved (Book III) fails to make any impact. Again, a medieval knight talking of the Commonwealth of Reason (Book II, 151) is an incongruous figure. It is impossible to feel about such an ideological being that "He is the Way, the Promethean, universal Man !" He is not a man, much less a universal Man.

Because of this lack of human reality and encounter, even when the hero's adventures, or wailings, are described *tumultuosissimamente* (Brajendranath's own phrase) they appear ghostly and unconvincing. In the Appendix he has tried to show the parallels and contrasts in the three quests. But the reader can be excused if he does not feel any one of these as genuine or dramatic enough. They are all part of

an encyclopaedic scheme and not that of any imaginative unity, and look rather alike. He tells us that he has tried "to avoid that amorphous and essentially unpoetic indefiniteness of outline which is the bane of subjective poetry". But has the effort succeeded? The reason for this final and inevitable failure may be, as we have hinted before, that the poem has been made in the mind, a comprehensive contemplative mind, it has not grown poetically. There is a basic disparity in the poem, in the manner of its conception and execution. The "spiritual dioptrics" of the poet's art have but produced "ghostly apparitions, luminous mists". With neither character nor action, as an "imaginative apprehension of the soul of the age" the poem does not convince. A philosopher's exercise, immense and impressive, and sincere, this profoundly intellectual poem contains bravura of imitations but it does not live primarily as a poem, does not hang together. These are *pensées*, obstinate questionings, viewed against the background of nature, the subjective self and history, questioning about life and death, about humanity redeemed; there is also the seeking, to "transcribe basic philosophic ideals" but it is really not a quest. It is more a soliloquy, a medley, of "Howling Infinite", than a blend of "old Myths with new". At one point he seems to hit upon the truth: "The hero's mental crisis at this stage . . . he suffers from a strange malady. His brain becomes, as it were, the brain of the world, and the entire history of human Passion through the Ages passes in procession through his disordered brain". In brief, it is, "a Spirit de Profundis wailing".

A brave and honest experiment at writing the critique of a Synthetic Age, *The Quest Eternal* is indeed a tour de force. In bits a young man's poem, a latter-day *Hyperion-cum-Prometheus Unbound*, it is a characteristic contribution by a noetic nympholept of the New Age. A warning and a challenge, the final impression left by this speculative afflatus, this precious and profound poet, "a cosmic voice, the soul's ventriloquy" is, however, little more than that of

A vasty, vasty voidness
And a misty, misty sadness.

We do not relegate it to oblivion by contemporary poetics or fashions in poetry, but in terms of that higher adequacy which it misses, the adequacy of poetic vision and the power of the rhythmic word and new-minted symbols of transformation. Brajendranath was not unfamiliar with the "great Tribulation which is Being." From his lonely watch tower he had thought and felt deeply about the human situation *sub specie aeternitatis*. But he sees and speaks more as an acute thinker than as a poet. The clarity and monumental sublimity of his ideas cannot save the poem, which remains, alas, a dance of bloodless categories. To bring the experiment to a successful issue, an intensity of vision and an adequate speech for the "world-passion of Creative Deity" are needed :

A greater spirit than the self of mind
Must answer to the questioning of his soul.

It is the thinker's tragedy that he cannot be a poet.

DANTE

Among somewhat chilly and remote reputations encountered by the Indian student of western classics Dante is one, the man who never smiled, the man who had returned from hell. But encounter is a wrong word, for due to fears, real or imagined, the student usually leaves him severely alone. A poet of the Middle, or 'Dark' Ages, how can he speak to us? Difficulties are exaggerated: his ethos, theme, language, technique, everything. Critical veneration and the 'sea of commentaries' create further artificial barriers. But, to believe Dorothy Sayers, who devoted years to Dante studies, the peculiarities of Dante's cosmology need not trouble us too much. As for the problem of belief no right reader of poetry ever bothered about it till the new critics started to shout.

One is not obliged to look upon Dante as *passé*, as a period piece. When Voltaire called him a mad man and his work a monstrosity he was but revealing a weakness of the Enlightenment. Charles Williams, himself a poet, is much more on the right tack. In *The Figure of Beatrice* he emphasizes that Dante deals with intense personal experience: "It is *true*." There is an amusing story about Williams who was once having his haircut and listening to his barber's love affair. "When my girl's about," the barber was saying, "I'm that happy I don't feel as if I had an enemy in the world." At which Williams jumped up and wrung the fellow's hand: My dear man, he exclaimed, that's exactly what Dante said! That is, it does not require the mediaeval theory of courtly love or the Theology of Romantic Love to feel what we all have or could have felt. Nearly every

critic offers his own Dante : theologian, moralist, dealer in 'wild Gothick fancies', political satirist, mystic, but seldom as a poet among poets, offering "an accurate image of actual experience".

It is no wonder that the modern reader is more familiar with the *Inferno* than with the rest of his work. What an existential confession ! Is it not also revealing that after *A Season in Hell* Rimbaud, *le poète maudit par excellence*, abandoned poetry, whereas the Dantean imagination could win beatitude (with which is associated Beatrice) out of death's kingdom ? This is but one example, though perhaps the most enduring, of his range and competence. Whatever one might think of the mediaeval world-view or theology, which in its intellectual aspects the poet took from Thomas Aquinas, its ready availability provided *The Divine Comedy* with a coherence and comprehensiveness which it would otherwise lack. Eliot was right in drawing attention to Dante's width of emotional range. Of course it is more than emotional. *The Divine Comedy*, wrote Eliot, "expresses everything by way of emotion, between depravity's despair and the beatific vision, that man is capable of experiencing. It is therefore a constant reminder to the poet, of the obligation to explore, to find words for the inarticulate, to capture those feelings which people can hardly even feel, because they have no words for them ; and at the same time, a reminder that the explorer beyond the frontiers of ordinary consciousness, will only be able to return and report to his fellow-citizens, if he has all the time a firm grasp upon the realities with which they are already acquainted". The solitary Dante summed up not only his own life but that of the age, of an attitude and an entire tradition.

What is *The Divine Comedy* about and what is its meaning ? The story, such as it is, is fairly straightforward. Dante, lost in a forest, is met by Virgil who has been sent by Beatrice to guide him through Hell and Purgatory. The guide can go no further. With Beatrice he ascends the ultimate Heaven, Empyrean or Paradise. In the end she also disappears leaving him in charge of St. Bernard of Clairvaux,

whose prayers bring Dante to a crowning vision—in which he has a glimpse of the Trinity and the universe, down to its least detail.

Apart from literary and theological conventions, which were part of his plan, Dante's intention in writing was eminently practical, even if escatological. True to his clerical vocation, the literal subject of the poem is, we are told, "the state of souls after death". But in the end the entire work is expected to remove those living in this life from a state of misery and to lead them to a state of happiness. This, by the way, is why it is called a comedy, because the poem celebrates progress from a state of damnation to beatitude. (The word 'Divine' was not Dante's coinage, but added by posterity.)

Unfortunately, Dante's oft-quoted remark about levels of meaning has made it all but impossible to arrive at a clear picture of his aim and achievement. In a letter to Càn Grande della Scala, prefixed to the *Paradiso*, following the example of Scriptural exegetes, Dante had suggested multiple meanings in his poem. Apart from the literal story of a journey through death's kingdom there were three other or higher possible meanings: the allegorical, the anagogical (or other-worldly) and the tropological (or personal and moral). Since then every kind of meaning has been fastened to the books, an exercise in ingenuity that shows no signs of diminishing.

But, essentially, *The Divine Comedy* is a poem of love. Only one must be careful in using that word. "When we lightly observe that 'O 'tis love, 'tis love that makes the world go round', we usually mean no more than that when Boy meets Girl things become a good deal livelier. But when a mediaeval man said the same thing, he meant it for a serious statement about cosmology." * And Dante was through and through mediaeval.

When Dante saw Beatrice Portinari he was nine and she even younger. What was the feeling like? Let Dante

* Dorothy L. Sayers

speak: "At that instant I say truly that the spirit of life, which dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart began to tremble with such violence that it appeared fearfully in the least pulses, and trembling, said these words, 'Behold a God stronger than I, who, coming, shall rule over me.'" Those familiar with Vaishnava poetry will no doubt remember parallel passages written, it is true, from the girl's side. The two did not meet frequently, and Beatrice married another, so did Dante. She died when only twenty-four, while Dante's life moved through the storm and stress of warring Italian cities and groups, he lived and died like an exile, almost in disgrace. But did he forget Beatrice? He brought his whole life at her altar and was himself lifted up. "to say of her what has never been said of any other woman". The *Divine Comedy* deals with three things primarily: the earthly image of Beatrice, the loss or death of that image and, finally, the recovery of that image in the Heavenly Beatrice. It thus enacts the birth-death-resurrection theme, enacts the mystery of existence and not merely illustrates Christian dogma.

With this Beatrice Indian readers will no doubt notice resemblance with *hladini shakti* among Vaishnava poets and even with the idea of the Mother Goddess. In *Inferno* (XXX, 136-41) occurs the following passage: "My Guide suddenly took me, as a mother—that is awakened by the noise, and near her sees the kindled flame—who takes her child and flies, caring more for him than for herself." Between this Beatrice and Helen the European consciousness had taken a stride, and has so far gone no further. A Goethe or a Lawrence is not a variation but a deviation.

Also, it is worth noting, it is not only Beatrice who is transformed but, as Michelangelo had noted the ancient alchemy, "*l'amante se l'amato si trasforma*", the lover is transformed into the loved one. This happens on the threshold of Paradise, this is Paradise. As Dante looks at *la donna gentile*, "Gazing on her such I became within" At the end of the symbolical journey Dante is restored to his original self, *svarupa*, *sua intera vita*, which he had lost. To that

extent this unpuritanic Pilgrim's Progress is part of Everyman's possible redemption—through Love and Wisdom, of which Beatrice is a symbol. Out of the inferno or vicious circle of history except this there is No Exit. That too is part of Dante's creative criticism of our loveless life. This was his, first and last of troubadours, *La Vita Nuova*, the new life, in a new key. It is this sublimation which, one thinks, is at the back of its sustained sublimity and relevance.

Most Dante readers know him by a single, scarifying line: "Leave all hope ye who enter here." One could, however, with greater justice, say: "Revive all hope ye who enter here." He who was guided on the upward way by Virgil and Beatrice in turn become our guide to the *eterna fontana*. To the extent that such a state is eternal or archetypal, it is a permanent possibility, here and now, *ihaiva*, as the Upanishad would put it. The promise is not merely post-mortem. Dante's adventure into death's other kingdom stands out as an ageless marvel of imaginative daring. Thanks to the poet we too, we who are so far removed, can participate in the vision and look upon the Light and Glory "which was from the beginning". The way forward is the way back. In his own words: "As long as the feast of Paradise shall last, so long our love shall radiate this vesture about us. Its brightness answers to our ardour, the ardour to our vision, and that is in the measure each has grace beyond his merit. When the flesh glorified and holy, shall be put on again, our person shall be more acceptable for being all complete." Transfiguration such as this is never without a price.

"Ah, how hard it is to tell what it was like!" It is Dante's genius and our good fortune that he could tell it as none before or after—the allegory of Ascension and Epiphany: *L'amor che move il sole e l'altra stelle*

HOME-THOUGHTS ON POETRY

A NOTE

'Till he has found himself he cannot cease'—that search for identity explains the human situation, predicament or journey. It also explains the state of poetry, life's faithful mirror or lantern on the way. Among the many definitions of poetry one knows it as nostalgia. Nostalgia for what? and why and how? As Mircea Eliade will have it, the most abject "nostalgia" discloses the nostalgia for Paradise, "the desire to find oneself always and without effort in the Centre of the World, at the heart of reality, . . . and to transcend the human condition—as a Christian would say, the condition before the Fall". More elaborately, according to the same authority: "Men have paid too little attention to such 'nostalgias'; they have not cared to recognise them as anything more than insignificant psychic by-products; or at the most, have agreed that they may seem to be of interest in certain inquiries into the forms of psychic evasion. But the nostalgias are sometimes charged with meanings that concern man's actual situation; and this entitles them to consideration by the philosopher as much as by the theologian." By poets and critics no less.

Even a brief, none too systematic, but reasonably serious consideration of some of these problems will show that the argument easily slips over the borders of ontology and human destiny and, by way of "devouring time", touches upon the notion of the Fall (or exile from heaven and home) and, finally, reaches redemption through Love.

We start with the suggestion that (most) poetry "returns upon itself". an enhanced return. This is a characteristic

that poetry shares with all the arts, including mysticism, according to which our life in its higher reaches pursues the Way of Return, or *ultra path*, as the *Báúls* call it. In a somewhat different context the point was made by Hopkins: *Beauty-in-the ghost, deliver it early now, long before death/ Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty's self and beauty's giver*. Poetry, as Robert Lynd once said, is essentially a home-coming. It is indeed Paradise Regained and not merely, as Auden suggests, a verbal paradise. To accept that would mean accepting the modern *Ars Poetica* which announces *A poem should not mean/But be*. But according to old wisdom, such as that of St. Thomas and before him others, "A thing is perfect so far as it attains its source". In the words of Plotinus, looking at a work of art the audience is stirred "to a recollection of the original". That is, the Source is also the Goal. And the voyage, ultimately, is a voyage of self-exploration. What else could it be? Tennyson's "Flower in the Crannied Wall" brings the same evidence, is part of the same predicament, or "astonishment":

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies.
I hold you, root and all, in my hand.
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are. root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

The awareness of "all in all" or return to the roots, the home, may of course be achieved in a variety of ways. Indeed, a great part of a poem's efficiency depends on the skill with which the notion of home is employed and transfigured. But always, after a successful return, "the poem's subject is viewed in a transfigured light, and the reader is lifted momentarily out of the flux and strife of things". In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, that strange psychological Odyssey, the sailor that goes out comes back as the ancient mariner—the journey or the return is the birth of poetry, of love:

A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware.

Where such an enlargement or purgation has not taken place *The Family Reunion* is likely to mean

The man who returns will have to meet
The boy who left. Round by the stables,
In the coach-house, in the orchard,
In the plantation, down the corridor
That led to the nursery, round the corner
Of the new wing, he will have to face him—
And it will not be a very jolly corner.

While in prison Oscar Wilde had at last come upon the truth that Christ had "realized in the entire sphere of human relations that imaginative sympathy which in the sphere of Art is the sole secret of creation". And, to repeat, what is that sole secret but Love?

Home, then, is not by a "few paternal acres bound" or "I remember, I remember". That, one might say, is home at its simplest or the most elementary, without sophistication. But, as Blackstone has pointed out, the romantic wanderers were for the most part "lost travellers", nomads to Nowhere. Homeless clouds, to use Shelley's phrase, the Outsiders to use the modern. Among the Victorians that "critic of life", Matthew Arnold, could but choose a scholar gipsy as the symbol of lost values and mythical adventure. As for *The Waste Land* 'What the Thunder Said' of the last section is all in vain. The land is *not* set in order. As people have noticed, there is no progression in the poem, no real journey or encounter. It is only or mainly a manipulation of events and effects, images and attitudes, a vast ventriloquism. How different is Dante! One remembers how his journey finally leads him back to the Source—*L'amor che move il sole e l'altra stelle*, The Love which moves the sun and the other stars. It is, however, possible to undertake Dante's posthumous journey here and now, *ihaiva*. A poet of modern India describes it thus :

In rare and lucent intervals of hush
 Into a signless region he could soar
 Packed with the deep contents of formlessness
 Where world was into a single being rapt
 And all was known by the light of identity
 And spirit was its own self-evidence.
 The Supreme's gaze looked out through human eyes
 And saw all things and creatures as itself
 And knew all thought and word as its own voice.
 There unity is too close for search and clasp
 And love is a yearning of the One for the One,
 And beauty is a sweet difference of the Same
 And oneness is the soul of multitude.
 There all the truths unite in a single truth,
 And all ideas rejoin Reality.

That is, the journey, return, or discovery, need not be physical, though it has often been presented in that form. Even Kazantzakis in *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* does not escape that primary necessity :

The restless itch to rove
 And rummage through the world exploring it
 All human worth and wickedness to prove.

More truly a shift of position or attitude would do as well. An inner journey or journey into the inner worlds is not unimaginable. This, reading "the text of without from within" is what Sri Aurobindo has done in *Savitri* :

This is the sailor on the flow of Time,
 This is World-Matter's slow discoverer,
 Who, launched into this small corporeal birth,
 Has learnt his tiny craft in the baby of self,
 But dares at last unplumbed infinitudes,
 A voyager upon eternity's seas
 A greater world Time's traveller must explore
 He is a spirit in an unfinished world
 That knows him not and cannot know itself ;
 The surface symbol of his goalless quest
 Takes deeper meaning to his inner view :
 His is a search of darkness for the Light,
 Of mortal life for immortality.

The clearest sign or proof of his achievement is a new dimension of experience, or symbolic perception, that the poem, an inner epic, provides almost throughout. This is no doubt easier done in smaller bits, in splendid charismatic moments. After describing the many and changing beauties in nature, the Kantian sensuous manifold, Hopkins turns back, from *natura naturata* to *natura naturans*, reminding both himself and us, explosively — of the Source :

He fathers forth whose beauty is past change.
Praise Him.

It is only by a return, to the roots above, as the Veda, the archetype of poetry, puts it, that the wheel comes full circle. Then beauty becomes its own essence, "the very vision" and we "rejoin the Origin" and learn to "Praise Him". For, as the ancients knew so well, beauty is a participation in the essence. *Tameva bhantamanubhati sarvam tasya bhasha sarvavidam bibhati*, All this shines by Him, it is His light that lights them.

In *The Estate of Poetry* Edwin Muir calls the chapter on Wordsworth "Return to Sources" and explains : "Wordsworth returned to a source of poetry when he returned to incidents and situations of common life ; but his return took him further back ; it took him back to the earth itself. He knew with unique clearness that we depend on the earth for our life. This is a common fact, but Wordsworth was aware of it as no other poet has been of the countless less palpable gifts which we owe to the earth, or to nature. His knowledge came to him . . . in that blessed mood when we see into the life of things".

Till, in our own way, we too can do that, we remain but refugees from Reality, self-lost, and then, as Yeats has it, mere anarchy is let loose upon the world. This is how Rabindranath Tagore saw it : "Where the harmony, between appearance and reality, between the human personality and an impersonal world of science, is not deeply felt, we are aliens and perpetually homesick". As Housman says :

Alone and afraid
In a world I never made.

This of course is a defeat for the creative imagination. All our distinctively modern literature and philosophy is but life in the Valley of Defeat. Parting, as Emily Dickinson said, is all that we know of Heaven. Or, a little differently, Nietzsche, *Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr*, Who has no house and yet will never build one. But, as we have said before, home is not merely a geographical location, a cluster of accidental associations. It is a deeper idea or state of being, part of the Great Memory, "the root, home". It is only in the home that all differences melt, the Many refer back to the One. In *Tao-Teh King* Lao-Tzu put it thus :

And as our eyes demonstrated to us, they all turned back
They may flourish abundantly,
But each turns and goes home to the root from which it
came.
Home to the root, home, I affirm, to the stillness.
This means, to turn back is destiny ;
And the destiny of turning back, I affirm, can never be
changed.

Essence of our humanity, "the destiny of turning back", holds the key to our ascent or return, from self to Self. In Christian terms : He who sees the Father sees me.

In less religious terms Leonardo da Vinci brings the same evidence, mark of his insight and maturity. Says Leonardo : "Behold, the hope and the desire of going back to one's country (*repatriarsi*) . . . like that of the moth for the light, and of the man who with perpetual longing looks forward with joy to each new spring and each new summer, and to the new months and the new years, deeming that the things he looks for are slow in coming ; and he does not perceive that he is longing for his own destruction. But this longing is in its quintessence the spirit of the elements, which finds itself imprisoned as the soul within the human body is ever longing to return to its sender ; and I would

have you know that this same longing is that quintessence inherent in nature, and that man is a type of the world." The return or nostalgia is a cosmic truth and symbol.

The words of Plotinus float back across the centuries : "Let us flee then to the Beloved Fatherland : this is the soundest counsel. But what is this flight ? This is not a journey for the feet. You must close your eyes and call instead upon another vision, the birthright of all, which few turn to use." Changing, for a moment, the metaphor, of journey to a ladder, we may go back to Plato, one of the archetypes of western nostalgia. So when anyone climbs the ladder of true love in this world, says Plato, "till he catches a glimpse of that other beauty—he has almost attained the goal. And this is the true discipline of loving or being loved : that a man begin with the beauties of the world and use them as stepping-stones for an unceasing journey to that other beauty, going from one to two and from two to all, and from beautiful creatures to beautiful lives, and from beautiful truths attaining finally to nothing less than the true knowledge of Beauty itself, and so know at last what Beauty is. This, my dear Socrates, said the wise woman from Mantinea, is man's true home, with its vision of absolute beauty, if we have in this life any home at all". Elsewhere : "The will of the divine part in us to maintain itself can only be represented as the coming home of the soul to itself, and the soul's final appreciation of its own intrinsic nature", *svabhava*. Such is the evidence of pagan antiquity, confirmed in the Christian ethos.

In the words of a modern poet echoing the agony and insight of ages :

These errors loved no less than the saint loves sorrows
Repeat, Love has left the world. He is not here.
O God, like Love revealing yourself in absence
So that, though farther than stars, like Love that sorrows
In separation, the desire in the heart of hearts
To come home to you makes you most manifest.

To come home like that is what man and poetry are

there for. Home-thoughts are always home-thoughts from abroad. Look Homeward, Angel : *Christ home, Christ and his Mother, and all his hallows.* Call the Muses home. Else :

To the stars from which he came
Empty-handed, he goes home ;
He who might have wrought in flame
Only traced upon the foam.

THE FUTURE POETRY ?

Romain Rolland described the contribution of Sri Aurobindo as the greatest synthesis as yet achieved of the genius of the East and the genius of the West. Today Sri Aurobindo is widely known as yogi and thinker, but few have heard of him as a poet, fewer as a literary critic. This in spite of the fact that his writings are characteristic and commanding, and indeed copious. But even more than the scope—which includes *Letters* ranging from Aeschylus to the Age of Anxiety—it is the quality of writing which sets him apart, and makes the task of assessment both mandatory and difficult. Above all, there are the serial essays, *The Future Poetry*, written between 1917 and 1920 but published in book form only in 1953. Here is the pitch of the Aurobindean argument. What is it like ?

The Future Poetry is concerned with the now vital question of a civilization on trial, to use Toynbee's phrase, and what poetry, "the rhythmic voice of life," can do about it. It can and must, according to our critic, bring back the possibility of "the discovery of a closer approximation to what we might call the *mantra* in poetry," roughly the poetry of vision, prayer, magic, and incantation : poetry as *mantra* and poetry as the key to the future. Poetry is neither an elevated pastime—"mug's game," as Eliot once informed a bemused Harvard audience—nor is it a matter of technique alone. Its privilege and higher function, its real business is to suggest rhythmically the soul-values of our expanding universe. The nature and essence of poetic speech and the poetic movement comes, he tells us, "from the stress of soul-

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vision behind the word ; it is the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in these inner and outer worlds." It holds a mirror to our soul-vision and progressive self-discovery "the progression of consciousness which conceives, orients and controls life." The possibility of a new and higher evolution of mankind, of which poetry is both an index and instrument is taken for granted. For to doubting Thomases it can never be *proved*.

Briefly, and in Indian terms, the thematic burden of *The Future Poetry* is poetry as *mantra*, poetry as prayer, invocation, and magic, above all as vision. Let our critic explain : "The *mantra*, poetic expression of the deepest spiritual reality, is only possible when the highest intensities of poetic speech meet and become indissolubly one, the highest intensity of rhythmic movement, of verbal form and thought-substance of style, and of the soul's vision of truth. . . . Or, let us say, it is a supreme rhythmic language which seizes hold upon all that is finite and brings into each the light and voice of its own infinite." This may sound—our author himself is aware of it—a somewhat mystic and Oriental account of the matter, but substantially there could hardly be a more complete description.

Such, then, is the hypothesis or point of view. But it is not a dogma, pronounced *ex cathedra*, though now and then it may sound like that. For, as we shall see, the evolutionary scheme is fundamental to all Sri Aurobindo's writing, analysis, and insight. "Poetry, like everything else, evolves," he says. And since poetry "is a psychological phenomenon, the poetic impulse of the mind and soul of man, therefore, in trying to follow out the line of evolution, it is the development of the psychological motive and power, it is the kind of feeling, vision, mentality which is seeking in it for its word and idea and form and beauty, and it is the power of the soul through which it finds expression or the level of the mind from which it speaks which we must distinguish to get a right idea of the progress of poetry".

So much by way of definition or statement of attitude.

There is another, and bigger, surprise in store. He chooses the history of English poetry, from Chaucer to early twentieth century, as illustration to prove the point. He does this because — though few perhaps will agree with him — to him English poetry seems to follow most faithfully the ascending curve of the human spirit in this kind of imaginative rhythmic self-expression. And so, after a glance at the national evolution of poetry, Greek, Latin, and French, he proceeds to sketch the progress of English poetry, which, he says, "began by a quite external, a clear and superficial substance and utterance (that is Chaucer). It proceeded to a deeper vital poetry, a poetry of the power and beauty and wonder and spontaneous thought, the joy and passion and pain, the colour and music of life, in which the external presentation of life and things was taken up, but exceeded and given its full, dynamic and imaginative content (the Elizabethans)." From there the attempt was made to master "the secret of the Latins, the secret of clear, measured and intellectual ideas (the Augustans). Then came an attempt, a brilliant and beautiful attempt to get through Nature and thought and mentality in life and Nature and their profounder aesthetic suggestion to certain underlying spiritual truths." The attempt of the Romantics "could not come to perfect fruition, partly because there was not the right intellectual preparation or sufficient basis of spiritual knowledge and experience," and what could be offered depended on the solitary and individual intuition of the poet; partly because after the lapse into an age of reason the spontaneous or the intense language of spiritual poetry could not always be found, or if found, could not be maintained. "So we get a deviation into another age (the Victorian) of intellectual and representative poetry, with a much wider range, but less profound in its roots, less high in its growth; and partly out of this, partly by a recoil from it has come the turn of recent and contemporary [that is, what was recent and contemporary at the time these essays were written] poetry which seems at least to be approaching the secret of the utterance of profounder truth with its right magic and speech."

At the end of the historical survey—the *précis* does it less than justice—he states his aesthetic ideals once more. The concluding portion is frankly more apocalyptic, and after giving some example of this kind of writing in the past he explains the conditions necessary if poetry is to fulfill its highest promise. In this he notes that “a collapse to the lower levels might bring human civilization to a new corrupted and intellectual barbarism . . . the possibility of such a catastrophe is by no means absent from the present situation.” The approaching end of poetry has been announced by many a prophet of doom. But this is to take a small view of its resources, its rationale and the way out. “Why, in such spiritless times, be a poet at all?” asked Holderlin. The answer came, strangely, from Nietzsche: “To *affirm*, *bless* and *deify* existence.” The way out, the hope of the race lies, we are told, in an “open realization” of the spirit of man, the infinity of Self and its fit expression in poetry, that is, in *mantra* again. According to Sri Aurobindo, “a larger range of existence made more real to man’s experience will be the realm of the future” and it is this which, as Wordsworth had seen earlier if in a slightly different context, “will bind together the vast empire of human society”.

This at least is a strong possibility suggested by the newer trends, if we know how to read the signs. (Have not Rimbaud and Eliot and the Symbolists all said the same thing in their own, *different* ways?) In other words “the idea of the poet who is also a Rishi (seer-poet) has made again its appearance”.

Of all the theories and histories of English poetry—and we have had quite a few during recent years—this sacred or hieratic *ars poetica* put forward by Sri Aurobindo is surely one of the strangest, one to tease us out of thought as doth Eternity. In his own words, “Perhaps no thinking age has been so far removed from any such view of life as the one through which we have recently passed, and even now we are not well out of its shadow . . . And yet curiously enough it is to some far-off light, at least to the view of ourselves at our greatest. . . that we seem to be returning” The

progress of poetry, as he has viewed it, "has been an index of the advance of the cultural mind in humanity, which having increased its scope by a constant expanding of the soul's experience, has now risen to a great height and breadth of intellectual vision and activity, and the present question concerns the next step in the scale of ascension." In other words "if poetry is a highly-charged power of aesthetic expression of the soul of man, it must follow in its course of evolution the development of that soul. I put it that from this point of view the soul of man like the soul of Nature can be regarded as an unfolding of the spirit in the material world. Our unfolding being has its roots in the soil of the physical life; it shoots up and out in many directions as the stalk and branches of the vital being. . . and from there, nestling in the luxuriant leaves of the mind, and rising from the spirit which was concealed in the whole process, must blossom the free and infinite soul of man, the hundred-petalled rose of God."

And the beautiful river still flows,
 And flows in time, and makes us
 Part of it, and part of him
 That, children, is what is called
 A sacramental relationship
 And that is what a poet
 Is, children, one who creates
 Sacramental relationship *

Granted his hypothesis, the conclusion is not only consistent, but inescapable. He is presenting us not with a flat but a fulfilment of what has been known and practised all through history. Even T. E. Hulme talked of an "intuitive language", while some years back Signor Vivante (*English Poetry and Its Contribution to the Knowledge of a Creative Principle*) began by pointing out that "the consciousness of a principle of inward light—an original self-active principle, which characterizes life and spontaneity as contrasted with mechanism—has found in English poetry one of its richest and highest expressions." Sri Aurobindo's

* George Seferis

commentary only points out the logical finale of such a self-expressive tendency. As in other areas of thought and experience, here too he has seen things in a new and reconciling, fusion vision. He sums up long, lingering, scattered suggestions and turns them, without palpable design, into a rationale of poetry at its purest, poetry of the peak, relating it to the larger law of human becoming. From Plato's enthusiastic madman, the sublimity of Longinus, the Christian hymns of glory and praise; from Shakespeare's poet, his eye in a fine frenzy rolling, to the romantic visionary, usually an outsider, peering into the life of things; through the symbolist strategy, full of fine sound and refinement often signifying nothing; through Rilke's "terrible angels," and the dislocation ("I hold sacred the disorder of my brains") and dubious illuminations of Rimbaud, through the cults of obscurity and "pure poetry" as some kind of sublimated musical nonsense, then of poetry as prayer (Abbé Bremond) and the poet as a mystic *manqué*; the dry dogmatics of Eliot, most competent verse rather than genuine incantation ("Out of the agony and the imprecision there springs the perfect order of speech, and the beauty of incantation"); the superb rhetoric and the defiant gesture that had become a second nature with William Butler Yeats ("Cast a cold eye/on life, on death./Horseman, press by.") the ironic Alexandrian poets of anxiety and the troubled doubtful personalities of the little self ("Alone, about a dreadful wood/of conscious evil runs a lost mankind./Dreading to find its Father lest it find/The Goodness it has dreaded is not good . . ."); the highly-wrought Canticles of Edith Sitwell; the later apocalyptic writers and the latest of bardic passion in Dylan Thomas ("After the first death, there is no death") . . . in Sri Aurobindo's hands all these broken hints have come together and turned into certainty. It is his amazing psychological maturity and orchestral, occumenical mind that can unite all these into a single theme—*Mantra*. Instead of the self-inflicted tortures of the "disinherited mind" he can point to a tradition at once more normal and universal and arrive at a far more striking and genuine recon-

ciliation of tradition and individual talent than any we have known for some time.

Mantra is not just good, or even great poetry, but poetry *per se*. It is not religious poetry but spiritual poetry that he is talking of. The rest is literature. The theory and practice of *mantra*, Sri Aurobindo's vision of poetry and poetry of vision is surely his most appropriate gift to the life of an evolving humanity. For him it was a daring and simple thing to do. On our part we must try to understand and assimilate — since knowledge is by assimilation, as Aquinas puts it — this emerging truth, unless of course we prefer to be flowers of evil with a short and fierce season in an adolescent hell or wish to suffer the nuances of the *Néant*.

It is only proper to point out here that the early poets of India, the Rishis, were seers and hearers of the supra-sensible Truth-Word. They had also the gift of communicating, expressing, or, as the Indian aesthete would say, "generalizing" (*sadharanikrita*) their experience. "One might almost say that ancient India was created by the Veda and Upanishads, and the visions of inspired seers made a people." They were among the acknowledged legislators of mankind. Obviously poetry such as this was not an entertainment, an intellectual exercise, or a display of "complex sensibility." The poet was something more than a maker of beautiful word and phrase, a favoured child of fancy and imagination, a careful fashioner of idea and utterance. The poet was a spokesman of the eternal spirit and beauty and delight, and he shared the highest creative and self-expressive rapture not unlike the original ecstasy that made Existence, the divine *Ananda*. Poetry such as this was a ritual and a remembrance, a purifier and builder of the soul, a means for the culture and integration of personality, *atmasamskriti*. As Robert Graves (*The White Goddess*) says: "The function of poetry is religious invocation of the Muse." At its height always so.

The soul of man and the soul of poetry ("the true creator, the true hearer is the soul") are a reality to Sri Aurobindo, and he can make them real to us as well. Needless to

say, he writes throughout as the poet that he is, even if some will demur to his novel annotation of the art of the possible, this pure, divine assault of the ether and fire. He speaks with authority, with full awareness of the foundations of his judgment, a clear and inspiring vision of the destiny of the spirit in man. He is not a doctrinaire nor is he excessively schematic. He is not a "philosopher-aesthetician", a creature against whom Eliot inveighs in his Preface to Vivante's book. He is not trying to choke or force growth and inspiration into a system. Tolerant of a hundred ways of the spirit, he knows that the intensity of the *Mantra* "belongs to no particular style, depends on no conceivable formula". A master of distinctions, of levels of consciousness and levels of poetic adequacy, he is particularly careful not to pay off poetry in terms of "philosophy". What he is not willing to forget is poetry's essential nature and deepest destiny.

The awareness of crisis and emergence—"At present the human mind is occupied in passing the borders of two kingdoms," he says—exposes the vast sweep of an inner, cosmic evolution, which extends almost beyond history. According to this view, "the human intelligence seems on the verge of an attempt to rise through the intellectual into an intuitive mentality". We become part of a greater reality, seeking expression in the poetry of awareness. "Poetry and art are the born mediators between the immaterial and the concrete, the spirit and the life." Sri Aurobindo places poetry, fairly and firmly, at the centre of human knowledge and activities, as the leader of our inner progress, the divine *Agni*, the sacred Fire in our creative evolution. Once more we hear authentic note of the Rishi, as poet and commentator :

O Word concealed in the upper Fire,
 Thou who hast lingered through centuries,
 Descend from thy rapt white desire.
 Plunging through gold eternities . . .
 Out, out with the mind and its candle flares.
 Light, light the suns that never die.
 For my ear the cry of the seraph stars
 And the forms of the Gods for my naked eye!

SEARCH FOR SIGNIFICANCE

To be suddenly pitchforked into an encounter with young minds can be a disturbing experience. You remember what Plato said about metaphysical greenhorns—they bite and they butt into everything! And I know very well that though I come from the fabled East, I am not among its Wise Men. Still when, last evening, it was suggested that we might meet for an informal get-together, the modern equivalent of the Greek symposium, I suppose, I readily agreed.

A teacher is a teacher. He needs his periodic victims. That of course is a way of saying. There were more selfish reasons. You cure us of the accumulations of age, of crusty habits. I have always valued, as all teachers do, the gift that you, perhaps unknowingly, bring with you—the gift of youth, of renewal. To lose faith in the youth of the nation is to lose faith in education. To contemplate ruin may not be our only role. Nor yours, I hope!

It is true, as we have been told by many voices, that philosophy today is philosophy in an age of crisis. Or, as Julian Huxley puts it, it is philosophy in a world at war. What's wrong with that? To the wise the world has always been in a state of crisis, has always called for a revision of goals. The war between good and evil is long-standing. However today it is not merely a crisis in civilization, as some imagine, but something more fundamental, a crisis in human evolution. In the words of an Indian thinker: "At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in

An impromptu address before the philosophy faculty students in Eastern Illinois university in winter, 1962.

which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in other it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way”.

But, crisis suggests the possibility of solution, unless we are doomed to self-pity. All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony, says Sri Aurobindo, and the greater the discord the greater will be the spur towards a solution. It is up to us to seek for the formula that will set us free or bind us. Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. Our covenant with stupidity is partly voluntary. We are still free to be free, instead of dabbling in dubious semantics and cults of meaninglessness, nothingness and logic chopping, and other forms of diversion that today pass for ‘philosophy’.

To move out of this mood of despair and irresponsibility calls for effort, the effort to be at once heroic and humble. Camus had hoped for sainthood *without* sanctity. It cannot be had for the asking. Philosophy means love of wisdom. You cannot love wisdom *and* continue in your unregenerate ways. As the broken statue told Rilke, you must change your life. This cannot be equated with the taking of a course or reading a few books, or even a number of books. The change must begin somewhere—preferably within you, within your area of interests, awareness, attitude. One must be willing and able to open the doors of perception, for you become what you perceive.

Door, always open

Only the blind eye sees not.

But to perceive the unity of all things, of truth, we have also to note certain differences, we have to make decisions. Philosophy, a search after knowledge, after purpose, involves making a number of basic, sometimes drastic decisions and discriminations. It is an examined life, world-without-end examination. This is so because there are facts, stubborn facts, which will always challenge values, disrupt systems. The war between fact and value is a greater civil war than any we have known. The world cannot survive half-fact half-value. We often compromise—that also is a fact—but we do so at our peril.

The search after value is a more exciting and dangerous Odyssey than any that the primitive Greek warriors had known in their rescue and wonderment of the face that had launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium. The Hymn to Intellectual Beauty is sublimer far than the hymn to a glamour queen, whose beauty could ruin but not restore. Helen was no Beatrice — and oh, the difference !

The need for discrimination is all the stronger in our times. This array of the advertiser's art, of which we are all unwitting victims — be it metrecale, Kellogg's corn, the cornucopia of "good living", or the pious platitude of politicians — calls for greater vigilance than what we have needed so far. We must be aware, all the time, must distinguish between the shoddy and the significant. Never off duty. No wonder we tire quickly and drift into the more agreeable forms of relaxation and dissipation, in other words we conform. But must we conform and lose our identity and independence ? Do we love to be nothing ? Perhaps !

That would be indeed a strange destiny for a nation and a race dedicated to the idea of freedom. Freedom, of course, is not merely political freedom or a constitutional concern for learned jurists, nor is it the freedom to "do just what we please". It is freedom from prejudice and pressure, from ignorance and illusion which form the major part of our motivation. It is freedom to lead a full life, to be fully ourselves. War begins in the mind of men, says the United Nations Charter, and it is there that it has to be fought. I will not cease from mental fight, said William Blake, till we have built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land. We all have our Jerusalem to build.

Philosophy, which is basically a theory of knowledge and a theory of value, wages a perpetual war against ignorance, a war to the finish. It involves a theory of mind, and when it is mature, of ranges of the mind if you like. Know thyself, is an old prescription. The knower must know himself.

But who art thou ? The Indians have suggested a simple, puzzling equation to the riddle of the Sphinx : Thou

art that, *Tat tvam asi*. All is there, for such as are capable of sounding the depths. Capacity is in proportion to interest. It is a pity that our universities are so little concerned and so full of dead wood, or plain gas. No wonder the most worthwhile contribution to modern thought has come mostly from outside the academic haunts. The House of Intellect has been, for the most part, "To Let", an empty house. Bats in the belfry.

In terms of the old equation we are sons of God and must be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect. To fulfil God in life is man's manhood. But these things are not done by *Diktat*, or university courses. It is not dogma but development that we need. We have to grow into the truth. Example, character, respect, a sense of the holy, these virtues are still needed and still possible. How poor, in this respect, is our civilization to the older cultures! How lonely the learner! 'Lonely is the man who understands.' And so, if necessary, you must walk alone. You will soon meet your companions. They come from all countries and from no country, the pilgrim band, the eternal *avant garde*.

You belong, as every student does, to the Brotherhood of Seekers. It is they who keep the world disinfected against the virus of settled habit, against falsity and foolishness. Look within and you will get all the help you need. It is not easy. But would you filch His peace without paying the price He has fixed for it? Would you like to have something for nothing? It is an old law, of sacrifice, struggle, *agon*, *tapasya*. There is no truth without tears.

The cult of the easy life is ultimately the most corrupting. Goethe had the wisdom to know that a life without suffering was a life cheated of its purpose. Suffer you must, anyway. But you have the option of turning it into a sacrifice. Why not do that?

A favourable view of modern civilization brings us to the same conclusion. For it is basically a triumph of mind over matter. The minute and many-sided techniques and controls, what are these but a search for order and convenience, which might free us from age-old disabilities? That the

expected freedom and fulfilment have not come, have indeed turned into something very different points to some strange error in our calculation and equipment. We have become victims of some monstrous miscalculation. By an awful trick we have become a slave of our slave, fallen into a rat trap which we have ourselves laid out. But mistakes are curable. We might even hope to profit by them. The decay and renewal of civilization, as Schweitzer points out, are both within the sphere of possibility.

This, I fear, is a long introduction for what I have to say. It may be that in this context, of a common crisis the same everywhere, some of the Indian insights might be of help to you. I shall mention, very briefly, some of these suggestions or conclusions.

The first is the search after Man's Final End. This metaphysical concern has distinguished the Indian mind from the earliest periods of her history. A comfortable, even a rationally ordered life is not enough. The Indian (not to be confused with the present-day Indian citizen) has an infinite longing for freedom, immortality, light, God. This is what he feels life is for.

But the Indian mind is not exclusive or ascetical, as is usually supposed. The religion of India has legislated for the normal individual and taken into consideration the satisfaction of normal human needs. It has tried to strike a balance between the needs and duties of man. Incidentally, it took great care to distinguish between instrumental and essential values, what Aldous Huxley has called ends and means. The contemporary confusion over this is everywhere and we seem to be swamped by our own schemes and perish at the altar of the tingods of gadgetry. What better fate for the descendants of Babbitt! How to tame technology is the question of questions, which neither western democracies nor the totalitarian regimes have tried to solve or thought of solving. Life is being lived without reference to first principles, and that is impossible. Indeed, the brighter idiots have come to doubt if there is any first or final principle. No wonder our life has become silly or absurd.

We get what we deserve, the Theatre of the Absurd.

Who will save us from the blight of triviality? It is against this background of Blank that we must see the antics of Babbitt's children or grandchildren. I mean the angry young men, the lost and the "beat" generation, that international assortment of irresponsibles. "Why should we live? What has society done for us?" ask these complacent cads. They ask questions without caring for the answer. In their beginning is their end. And yet they are a danger signal, a necessary evil, if nothing else. They disturb the placid waters — of our easy assumption about success and making good, keeping up with the Joneses. The beats have their champions. As Carl Sandburg recently said: "There always ought to be beatniks in a culture, hollering about respectables." The beats may be victims more than martyrs, but it cannot be said that we have learnt the lesson. All Americans are sure of success, you must have heard that sad phrase, how often! *This is the other side.*

The follies of a society without sanction cannot be cured by a fiat or a few pious resolutions. Technology has to be tamed, and that is not easy. In Indian myths we read the story of the Churning of the Ocean. (The ocean is a symbol of universal manifestation of creation.) Out of that churning came both good and evil, the goddess of plenty as well as the evil of poison. Who would counteract the fumes of the dreaded poison? Even the little gods trembled. Then the great god, Shiva, drank it all up and so he came to be called the blue-throated ascetic. The reason why I am telling you this story is that it bears a close analogy to the present world's crisis over the atom. Where is the modern Shiva? Where is he indeed?

The adventure of ideas is exciting, this new Pilgrim's Progress. I hope that some of you will dedicate yourself to the search after meaning, and find out a faith for living.

Consider well the seed from which you grew :
You were not formed to live like animals,
But rather to pursue virtue and knowledge.

Sharp as the razor's edge is that path, say the ancient

texts. But it will be better than the soft education or no education which is all that we are getting or doling out to others. It will be better than the small successes that are but failures of the soul. The age of heroism is not over. And what can be more heroic and human than to join the crusade for values? The task of our times calls for new workers. In the building of a common civilization for the peoples of the world, this meeting of nations, there is work for all of us. We must not shirk it, not allow the parochial to cloud the perennial. Let us be responsible to the emerging truth.

In a letter Eugene O'Neill once wrote: "The playwright of today must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it—the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfactory new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with. It seems to me that anyone trying to do big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the little subjects of his plays or novels or he is scribbling around the surface of things." This is our concern, everybody's concern, on and off the stage, "the big subject behind all the little subjects". This is the drama of destiny in which we have all a part to play. To refuse is to surrender our humanity, it is to be less than human, to declare our education as empty of purpose. The remaking of modern man is the task of tasks. I hope some of you will take it up where others have left it. It is a task that carries its own reward.

To live in the light and bliss of truth, and to will what He wills, that is the supreme secret. May your stay in the university guide your steps towards significance, towards man's ultimate metaphysical romance, the secret of the Self. All true romances are supposed to end in a marriage. Let us not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments. The marriage of the East and the West has often been rumoured, a marriage in which, to quote an Eastern master, Matter will be the Spirit's willing bride. I hope to see you as the best men and bridesmaids in that wedding. Haven't the banns been put up yet?

IDEALS OF OLD INDIAN EDUCATION

This, as you know, is *not* an age of ideals. On the contrary. It is an age of absence of ideals, and those whom we call idealists to their face we also call fools behind their back. So I feel a little uneasy about the subject of my talk : Ideals of Indian education. But, speaking seriously, education must involve ideals, of some sort or other. The drawing out of the perfection inherent in man, that is how an Indian thinker once defined education. It is a technique for working out or operating that ideal of perfection in life. No society that cares for survival can do without it. Education is our deepest need. But education for what ?

More important than mere survival is of course the question of significance. Today both survival and significance are threatened as never before. Why live and for what ? That is a question education has always had to answer and must answer today too, if we are to be saved from ourselves. As Faulkner pointed out, our tragedy today is that there are no longer problems of the spirit. In the words of a modern poet :

It is the world's one crime that its babes grow dull,
Its poor are ox-like, limp and leaden-eyed.
Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly,
Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap.
Not that they serve, but have no gods to serve,
Not that they die, but die like sheep. .

Not only die, but live like sheep. Between sheepish conformity and brutish belligerency is there no alternative ?

From an address delivered at the Yale university, U. S. A. in spring 1962.

In our present distress we look back and sometimes wonder if the old insights could not be of some use to us. For the ancients had what we singularly lack — vision, courage and a simple sense of wholeness. More than that, they had a faith for living. Or do we really think that these ancient ideals have lost their savour, that they no longer speak to us, that we have quite other problems to solve? That is the familiar view but it is clearly an error. The essence of education is ever the same. The forms change, the details differ, but the central insights remain. We are of course not asked to make a fetish of the past. Far from it. As an Indian thinker, of whom later, puts it, "We do not belong to the dawns of the past but to the noons of the future." To do that it will be first necessary to look closer to the principles of education as the ancients understood and practised them.

. Recently in a faculty picnic I overheard the following conversation. (Weary but angry young lady): "I don't think life has any meaning or how it *can* ever have one."

(Sad male): "In that case, you should not teach."

This made me think. It is always a race between education and catastrophe. Today there is little doubt as to which side is winning. No wonder the most far-ranging of our historians, Toynbee, has been obliged to describe the state of our civilization as a civilization on trial. One can guess the verdict: Not fit to survive, shows strong suicidal tendency. Frightened as never before, by our sins of omission and commission, we seem to look everywhere, except the one place where help is likely to be found, that is within ourselves. As Epictetus said, "Ruin and recovery are alike from within."

It is against this background of doom and disaster that I should like to place before you a few facts or some aspects of Indian education. Not its accidents and accretions, nor its present wasteful uncertainty. But the essential truths and insights. If now and then these insights and practices seem to differ, and differ radically, from our own 'progressive' ways and assumptions, so much the better. It is good to be shocked and shaken out of complacency.

I do not however for a moment wish to suggest: Adopt

our nationally advertised brand and avoid disaster. Propaganda is out of the question. Also no one can borrow truth from another nor can it ever be imposed from outside. It must grow from within. One has to grow on one's own lines. Here is one line, the Indian line, as it used to be.

It is a line that reaches to the farthest end. Swami Vivekananda put it like this : "The use of higher education is to find out how to solve the problems of life and this is what is engaging the profound thoughts of the modern civilized world, but which was solved in our country thousands of years ago." I myself would hesitate to put it that strongly, for I do not think we have solved our problems, if by solution is meant that we have successfully applied these ideals to the whole of our life and now there is nothing more to be done. But I do not think that Vivekananda meant that either. What he really meant was, I suppose, that in so far as certain principles are concerned, the Indians have decided. They have chosen and stand by their choice. If anyone, out of ignorance or foolhardiness, denies or rejects these principles he is being untrue to India, if not to himself.

The aims of education are always one with the aims of life. Now, what are, rather were, the aims of Indian life? Briefly, the ancient Indians aimed at a balanced social system that satisfied individual needs and led, by degrees, to liberation or *moksha*. It was a life of discipline leading to freedom, the whole spectrum, in fact. Hedonistic interests were not ignored, pleasures and duties were recognised, but always placed under the rule of a happy moderation or restraint. Whitehead describes Buddhism, in the main a monastic order, as a colossal application of metaphysics to life. Indian society was perhaps an even more colossal application of metaphysics to life. In a slightly different context and language Dr. Birenbaum has told us the same thing. "To what are the universities of a free land dedicated?" he asks. And the answer is : "To free men who know *what* being man and being free can be."

What were these metaphysical and psychological assumptions of freedom in society? How were these ideals carried

out through the lives of the young learner and the teacher ? Finally, what bearing, if any, do these have upon our present crisis ?

First, Indian education drew a clear distinction between knowledge of essence and knowledge of phenomenon, between knowledge of Self and knowledge of things *para vidyā* and *aparā vidyā*. It admitted both, but there was never any doubt as to which was higher and more desirable. The wise ones knew "what knowledge is of most worth," to use Spencer's phrase, though not in the sense in which he used it. In our own times knowledge of Self has been handed over to the doctors of the dungheap and God has been psycho-analysed out of existence. The secrets of the Self, the nature of the Divine Ground, our relationship with God, form no part of the curriculum, except perhaps in a few parochial schools here and there. Knowledge of things and processes is all that we have and all that we seem to care for. It is all Process without Reality, or Whitehead without the head ! This simple error has led to an 'impoverished reality' and now we are about to be crushed by the weight of Things. Emerson's lines come to the mind :

There are two laws discrete
Not reconciled—
Law for man, and law for thing ;
The last builds towns and fleets,
But it runs wild,
And doth the man unking

After nearly a century the words sound even truer than when they had been first written down. No wonder from the standpoint of traditional wisdom all our knowledge — of which we are both proud and afraid — is looked upon as a form of Higher Ignorance. It was recently pointed out that in their space flights neither the Russian nor the American astronauts could find God anywhere. The bigger news that escaped publication was that He had seen them both and was not pleased at the prospect. Of course He hasn't reported to the United Nations, because it would be useless to do so.

The point, as Hutchins (*The Higher Learning in America*) has seen so clearly, is that today we have neither theology nor metaphysics. Our knowledge is provisional, empiric, specialized, knowing more and more about less and less, a scheme of limited orderliness but quite unrelated to any first principles or purposes.

By contrast, Indian education—like Indian culture which it has helped to shape and reflect—is based upon a Theory of Knowledge and a Theory of Value. Most modern societies would seem to possess neither. In fact for most of the time they are in hot (and therefore blind) pursuit of anti-human ends. The cult of Things has culminated in a cult of Death. As stimulus a new myth or idolatry has been furnished—the myth of automatic Progress. Irving Babbitt had a phrase for this; he called it progress towards the precipice.

The distinction between lucky skill, the successful exploitation of natural resources (but see Rachel Carson) and more truly human purposes, between ends and means, between instrumental and essential values, is fundamental to a balanced life. This the modern world is determined to ignore or do away with. The pity is that most of the modern universities have been so indifferent to these basic issues and been content to behave like sheep. One might say that for the last three hundred years or so, the universities have encouraged, at least lived under, a simple but devastating heresy—that there is no meaning either in man or in the universe. India, if not the Indian universities of today, has always stood for this basic distinction, for the first principles, first thing first.

In keeping with this concern for Final Ends Indian education, like Indian culture, was based upon a profound sense of respect, or *śraddha*. Whereas in our present-day world everything is casual and all sense of respect, including self-respect, has been allowed or forced to disappear. In such a world the idea of respect or reverence, unless it be for money or the latest model car, appears a throwback from the

dead past. In fact, it is we who are dying, because we have denied the past and chosen to be less than ourselves. We have traded personality for fragments and now lack that modicum of self-respect which would enable us to be human. Only with a return to the lost sense of respect, respect for the universe, for life, for truth and the teacher (who embodies the truth) shall we be once more on the road to survival, for by that alone shall we have regained a true faith for living. It is no wonder that this idea of Reverence for Life came to Albert Schweitzer, surely one of the great teachers of our times, with the shock of a revelation. His example is a clear recognition of the simple truth and a criticism of our un-ethical, non-metaphysical life, with its witchcrafts of science and the compulsive illusion of good times.

This brings me to the vexed problem of Personality. It is a tricky word and has been much abused in recent writings. For instance, the "personality" of a popular star. The absurd exhibitionism of this and other specimens is supposed to inspire today's bright young things. No wonder the universities are losing. Without pursuing the subject further, I would submit that there is a greater respect for personality and a better chance of its developing under a traditional system, where ideals are shared than in an atomistic society like ours where there are no ideals to share. After all, it is only now that we hear of the "abolition of Man" and the elimination of personality. We rely, more and more, on mechanical aids, of every kind, and call this dependence Progress. Very soon, one suspects, the only *raison d'être* for preserving the species might be as feeders of the Machine, to oil the wheels and press the buttons. In *Brave New World*, you will remember, the almighty State teaches its citizens even while they sleep. That is it. But will it ever teach them to wake up — from the horrible hypnosis of streamlined Progress, which is of course another name for streamlined Efficiency and Conformity spelt large? Or are we condemned to be slaves of our slaves? In brief, traditional cultures, though not humanistic are human. Ours, ostensibly, aggres-

sively humanistic, tends to be increasingly in- and anti-human.

I will give you another example of the care and thought given to develop normal, decent young men and women. Today we talk of the residential university and think of it as an achievement. In India (of old) the students lived *with* the teacher, as members of the family. This made for small numbers and individual attention became not only possible but inevitable. The students weren't merely roll numbers or faceless abstractions. Also the fact of living in a family held other advantages: it was a home of learning, in which one felt a moral continuity, with little or none of that fierce, secret struggle between home and school, and no scope for the sowing of wild oats, no headache for the worried Dean. As John Dewey once wrote: "The much lamented separation in the modern schools of intellectual and moral training, of acquiring information and growing in character is simply the expression of failure to conceive and construct the school as a social institution." The Indian teacher taught as much through the lessons as through his personal conduct, which was expected to be above reproach. It was a living lesson. When a journalist had asked him for a message, Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have said, "My life is my message." How many modern teachers could pass that test? One shudders to think. The universities of today have quietly, and perhaps wisely, abdicated that impossible role of providing moral examples. The breeding of barbarians and beatniks is easily explained.

From all this one can see that the life of an Indian student was far from being easy. Education had not become, as Justice Douglas seems to think it *has* become in our own days, "merely the opportunity to have pleasurable experiences." Among other things the student had to learn the virtue of humility and the ancient law of sacrifice on which, the Hindu believes, the progress of the soul and the world depends. For the sake of the common good the wise will deny or sacrifice himself, runs the Sanskrit proverb. Another tells us that the noble-minded man, trained from youth,

“pleases the whole universe by his numerous acts of service”, *tribhuvanamupakārārenubhi prīṇayantah*. It was a highly civilized ethics. A word about the Teacher and the Teaching and I have done.

The traditional high respect shown to the Indian teacher is a matter of history. Something of it survives to this day. The king is honoured only in his own land, the scholar everywhere, is a popular saying in the country. The teacher, as we have said before, embodies the truth. He is more important than even one's parent, for he introduces you to the world of value, of truth. He gives you the light by which to live. You can never hope to repay him what he gives, except through humility and gratitude. We naturally wonder how and why the teachers managed to earn this extraordinary kudos or prestige. The prestige wasn't earned without a price, often a heavy price. Some of these are bound to strike us as rather odd, almost impossible to revive or emulate.

Here are a few. To begin with, the teacher did not “sell” knowledge. In other words, there were no tuition fees. In this the Indian teacher was but obeying the occult law—if you don't jump at the phrase—that no material benefit was to be had from the exchange of spiritual gifts. The Indian teacher, therefore, did not run after patrons and foundations, did not have to wait upon the “whim of the donor or the public demand”. He did not ask for a raise, he just did not have a salary, fixed or otherwise. It was for the patron to seek him out. He taught (the qualified pupil, not every flannelled fool that came along) because it was his duty to teach, “his own work to do”. It was his *dharma*, his law of being.

In brief, the teacher was not in any one's pay, he had no Board of Curators to please. He served truth and you might say his own nature. Education had no cash value, which, for most of us, is about all the value it has. It was in the highest sense a fulfilment of duty, a vocation and not a profession.

How was the teacher maintained, you ask. By patron-

age, of course. But this was not a salary. The nature of the patronage differed from place to place, from person to person, from age to age. These teachers, it might be added in passing, were not great consumers of useless goods nor was advertisement such a potent force in those days. Not how much but how little was their motto. It was a simple life, but *not* a life of poverty or negation. In fact it had a fullness and a fineness, an inner richness which we can only gape at from a distance. The only message of their life is a simple and straightforward one: Change your life, if you dare.

I now come to the last but not least factor in Indian education. What gave it this fullness, this harmony? The Teaching, of course, the contemplation of Essence, from which all trivial motives had been carefully sifted.

The details of the Teaching, and the technique, need not detain us here. What we are looking for is the essence of the experiment and the essence is the same everywhere. It is the psychological sanity of the Indian teachers that is so striking, that speaks to us across the centuries, if we will but hear. These ancient Masters not only believed in their premises, but they rigorously experimented with these, lived these out, as we say. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, than whom there is perhaps none so competent to speak on the twin topic of education and evolution: "India has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body. . . Always she has distinguished and cultivated in him a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul, because at the summit of its ascent it arises to something greater than them all, into a spiritual being, and it is in this that she has

¹ See "On the Selective Service Qualification Test (66) college students preparing for other professions. After that, in order of merit, we find majors in mathematics and the physical sciences in the biological sciences, in the social sciences, in the humanities, in general arts, in agriculture, in business and commerce, and last, we blush to say, majors in education." J. M. Stephens, *Education Psychology*, p. 211.

found the supreme manifestation of the soul of man and his ultimate divine manhood, . . . if it is once admitted as a true description, then it should be clear that *the only true education* (italics mine) will be that which will be an instrument for this real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation."²

It must be clearly understood that this view of life, in terms of a spiritual evolution of the human being, "the only true education", was neither ascetic nor anti-scientific. Self-control is essential to self-understanding. To that extent this was a discipline and not a game. As to science, it was itself a science, *Brahmavidya*, the science of ascent and self-integration, it was also called the science of the One, *ekavidya*. And the intention? The intentions were strictly practical. In the crisis through which we are passing we shall have once more to return to this lost secret and science, the Wisdom that we have denied and disparaged. We have to humble ourselves before the truth, before the truth can be ours. In our sacred texts, the Upanishads, we hear of a student coming to the teacher and, as was the custom then, begging to be accepted. The teacher begins by asking him the subjects he has studied. After mentioning a long and formidable syllabus he cries out in agony: "Yet. . . I am in sorrow. Lead me over, I pray, to the other shore that lies beyond this sorrow." This was also Faust's predicament:

I have studied now Philosophy
And Jurisprudence, Medicine
And even, alas, Theology
From end to end with labour keen;
And here, poor fool, with all my lore.
I stand no wiser than before.

Way back in the thirties Rufus Jones had pointed out that it would be well for us to see whether there is any place for the sense of the holy in our building plans. If there is not, our vast educational outfit, our extraordinary scientific discoveries and economic programs would only make the

collapse the more terrible. When our own anguish and disillusionment are complete and we too cry out to be delivered out of the devilry of modern history the Teacher will appear. He is within all of us and he alone can cure us of the insane ideologies that we pursue at our peril: the philosophies of absurdity and meaninglessness; this civilization of plenty, of gadgets, of money economy, of misused leisure, of false utilities and betrayed purposes; the collective paranoia of political mistrust and mounting hatred which make us resemble none so much as the enemy we would all like to destroy. A whole age can be mad and mistaken. Ours probably is.

India, it has sometimes been said, preserves the knowledge that preserves the world. But the knowledge is not a monopoly. (And modern India is another story.) It is not a secret weapon. It is and has always been an open secret, which the wise have spoken in many tongues and in many ages, and is still being spelt in the lonely thought of the intellectuals the world over. It is a free gift. Teaching is always teaching on the edge of the abyss. That is what makes it so exciting. The Indian teaching is part of a mature attitude towards the perennial problems of life, problems that do not change with the waxing and waning of the moon. Indian education is, basically, a training in fullness and freedom, an attempt to push or lead the human whole towards the future, to educate man in the ways of the spirit or of his own evolution. This is the one aspect or ideal of Indian education that I would like to place before you, for the good of men and generations yet unborn. *What can the dove of Jesus give you now but wisdom, exile?*

TOTAL EDUCATION : a brief look

Most people would agree that we are passing through a crisis, be it of civilization or evolution or both. Not many will agree as to the nature of the crisis, its causes or its cure. But it is a safe guess that to meet this crisis, the impending collapse, we shall need a new strategy or weapon, briefly a revolutionary theory and practice of education. It will have to be education in a new key. Total or Integral Education (not to be confused with what Totalitarianism attempted to do, not at all). Total Education is part of our predicament—for it involves difficult and delicate adjustments—as well as the way out, *if there is a way out*. No patchwork, “patchwork conceptions and piecemeal practice”, will do. Total Education or education of the Whole Man* is today “an obligation imposed by the nature of things, a mission in which every man or woman who knows the difference between true and false, between what has a right to be and what has not, is called to be minister, teacher and learner both in one.” In our present crisis Total Education is the summary imperative which we must either obey or be damned for disobeying. Educate or perish.

Essentially a social institution or enterprise, education is concerned, very often in an unconscious and disorganized fashion, with the transmission of values and skills, with know-why not less than know-how. Some idea, clear or vague, right or wrong, of purpose and personality is part of

* “Education concerns the whole man, and the education man is a man with a point of view from which he takes in the whole world. Education concerns the whole man, man *capax universi*, capable of grasping the totality of things” Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of culture*, Mentor-Omega, p. 36

education everywhere. But most, if not all, historical cultures have been obliged to work within a restricted range, of limited ideas, limited by rigid, regional or time-barred notions and ultimately destroyed by corrosive conflicts and contradictions. Everywhere some aspect or capacity or manner of adjustment has dominated. A full and happy flowering of the human personality, of *all* its possibilities, has been rarely attempted, much less achieved. The idea of wholeness, if not wholly absent, has not been the chief aim of most education or of civilization. Today the physical drawing together of the world has forced upon us a common approach to education or a philosophy of world education. As Borsodi (*The Education of the Whole Man*) point out : "A new programme of education is what the crisis of the times calls for." More than an expediency, that way lies our salvation, the only hope.

It is this that the modern age, or the future, must provide. Everywhere, East or West, there are indications of such a revision of goal. A change of this nature will naturally involve criticism of most of our current values and practices. It is not surprising that both Vinoba Bhave and Robert Hutchins are agreed that the whole scale of our values, and emphasis on Analysis, will have to give place to a new need for Synthesis. The overall commercialism of our age has also to submit to more human purposes and the era of competition to yield to the idea of welfare and human aid.

The impersonality of Science and Organisation has to be corrected by a new sense of personality and inter-personal or human relationship. The dichotomy of Knowledge and Wisdom must be got rid of. Dogmas of every kind, religious or scientific, have to be replaced by a more liberal attitude : of not Either/Or but Both. Instead of part, or specialized, education for particular functions or jobs we shall need "the co-education of both body and mind," an education of the whole man. Also, the isolation of action from contemplation must end.

In *The Future of Education* Livingstone had pointed out, "We lead a life of action without thought ; or we think in a

vacuum, without the realities and problems of the world. Neither form of isolation is satisfactory." Instead of regimentation we shall follow freedom, whatever the risk. The militant nationalist formula will have to be replaced by a growing international idea, that is the obsession with National Histories must give place to a saner philosophy of history.

As Toynbee puts it, "The peoples of the world cannot learn to understand each other if they confine their attention to the present surface of life and ignore the historical depths." The age-old quarrel between civilization and asceticism has to be resolved in terms of "the United Kingdom of Heaven and Earth." In place of two worlds, or two cultures, we shall need a unified world. The individual too must find his centre or unity. Where else is that unity to be found except in the hidden unity of his soul?

As the wise have always known, "the psychic being is also a great discovery to be made requiring as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents". That is, for the One World we shall need a new concept of world personality or, as Tagore might say, the *Visvamanab*. Only that will survive which is consistent with the universal, was a favourite idea of the poet.

The prescription or list of requirements is far from complete. But this or something like this will be needed before Total Education can come into its own. This is, however, the task of our times in which we are all engaged. The revolution in education for which we plead can be started anywhere. And by anyone. You are needed.

What is the image, or specification, of the Integrated or Balanced Person to be? He will not be cut according to a mental formula or strict pattern, a free variation is the rule of the Spirit and Nature everywhere. Yet certain broad indications or general descriptions are possible.

In defining a completely educated man, it has been said, we are in fact defining a god, though, alas, all the gods have not been remarkable for their IQ. Also in the future that we look forward to many of the gods might shed their beards.

The mutation will be novel and not merely a repetition of a past model. It will be the creation of new possibilities and dimensions, a more than Greek *paedeia*. For this a new centre of personality, of goals and activities, is called for.

In the words of Lewis Mumford who has thought long and anxiously on the subject : "Man's principal task today is to create a new self, adequate to command the forces that now operate so aimlessly and yet so compulsively. This self will necessarily take as its province the entire world, known and knowable, and will seek, not to impose a mechanical uniformity, but to bring about an organic unity, based upon the fullest utilization of all the varied resources that both nature and history have revealed to modern man. Such a culture must be nourished, not only by a new vision of the whole, but a new vision of a self capable of understanding and co-operating with the whole."

His of course is not the only voice. The vision of universal education itself is not so new. But never was the need for it greater, and many Western thinkers or groups of thinkers have said much the same thing, people who know that "a kind of mutation of the ideas which govern the world" is about to take place. We cannot deal with these systems, schools or insights except to mention that there is a growing consensus. Even the Existentialists have been known to talk of *Totalitatdenken* which comes close to Sanskrit *samyakdrishti*.

What about India? The thinkers of modern India—significantly, all of them non-academic, that is not belonging to any of the many universities—bring their own evidence. On the strength of these visionaries Ralph Borsodi has paid us a somewhat handsome compliment when he says : "History seems to be setting the stage for a drama in which the leading role may be played by India." While in present-day India confusion rules, it is a fact that, among others, Vivekananda, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo have all been, in their own way, pioneers in education ; and they have essayed the journey from nationalism and traditional values towards universalism and the freedom of a new being, futurebound.

Their ideal of personality and perfection—and education, according to Vivekananda, is the drawing out of the perfection inherent in man—cuts across all narrowness and moves towards an unvalled horizon, a human synthesis which is surely a promise of better days. Could we but live it !

Perhaps the simplest, yet most comprehensive statement of the New Education, if we may so call it, has come from the Mother, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, who must be considered as one of the greatest unacknowledged teachers of today. With dazzling clarity she has suggested the way out, and the ideal to be followed. Underscoring the need for greater consciousness for all who seek perfection she mentions a simple, four-fold discipline (its method we cannot here go into) : physical vital, mental, and psychic and spiritual education.

According to her, "These four aspects of the discipline do not exclude each other, one can follow them all at the same time, indeed it is better to do so." And as we rise higher, we shall perceive, she tells us, "that the truth we seek is made up of four major aspects : Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. These four attributes of Truth will spontaneously express themselves in our being. The psychic will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind that of infallible knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and a perfect harmony."

If the human animal is teachable—which it is possible to doubt—if the challenge of the crisis is to be met we shall have to change our values, our aims and methods of education. The task is tremendous. "Yet we cannot afford to shy away from it or to exclude any part of the human race from its scope." Without such an education, or change of consciousness, a total transformation of our present-day society, our personality and culture, nothing will have been done.

But with the ideal of transformation before us, as the "magnet of our difficult but inevitable ascent", there will always be work to be done. Around the creators of the values, said Nietzsche, revolveth the world, invisibly it revolveth.

In the noble words of L. P. Jacks : "The conception of education which I desire to bring before you is the conception of a New World just discovered by pioneers. . . . We are standing on the fringe of a vast continent, stored with unimaginable riches waiting to be explored. . . . Before us lies the great romance of the future." A romance which it is our duty and destiny to fulfil.

In that adventure of ideas and experience, of consciously co-operating with our own becoming, the birth of a new order, he who is not with us is against us. On which side would you rather be ?

WHY I AM STILL TEACHING ¹

Why am I still teaching? Some time or the other that question must have hit every person in the profession. Poor working conditions, lack of equipment, unimaginative, if not unscrupulous bosses, decline in standards, salaries a national shame,* status at low par, research facilities non-existing or not worth mentioning, today's young are 'hopeless' (indeed so, but thereby hangs a tale) — who has not heard the song of songs? The Staff Common Rooms in India ring with no other music. Leaving aside politics, the teaching profession contains perhaps more lost souls than any other. No wonder when these men, or, worse, their new masters, start sermonizing few are taken in. Inanities from public platforms impress no one, certainly not today's young. Give them credit for that.

Still here I am and, I believe, in good company. Given a choice I would choose no other. My only prayer would be that I might be able to do the work a little better than before. On this razor's edge who can say that he has never faltered? But I would not dream of changing it for another. Not if I can help it.

Why? It is not an easy question to answer. Temperament, I suppose. And once a teacher always a teacher. Also teaching is, at least used to be, a prestige position, with a halo about it. Ancient Indian ideals spring to the mind. The psychological soundness of that system, its quality control, emphasis on competence, sense of respect and thoroughness are hard to beat. The old gurus and pandits were far better

¹ First published by the Ministry of Education, India, 1966.

* No longer so, I am afraid. Not at the university level, at any rate.

equipped for their job than the half-baked Ph.D.-s of today. Also they represented their culture, were part of it, had a greater stake in the community's welfare (instead of the dubious privilege of belonging to a Welfare State). They had of course a greater sense of standard.

All the same, to expect a revival or repetition of the good old days, a fond dream with some, is a vain hope. As Sri Aurobindo once put it, The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit. A mere revival or wordy demands for putting the clock back cannot do this.

The fact is, except for a few seminal thinkers, usually ignored, the whole of our education, or what passes for education, is in a mess. Everywhere one senses a loss of vitality, courage, common honesty, a comprehensive outlook, what the Sankaracharya has recently castigated as a loss of character.

Some of the President's own remarks echo an idealist's unease over the situation. Way back in 1934 he had been heard to lament : "There is a remarkable agreement among educationists today that the system of education requires drastic revision from the foundation to the flagpole. It is out of date and unsuited to modern conditions, and involves a colossal waste of intellect and energy."

But neither generalities nor official tinkering will set the house in order. What is needed is a root-and-branch policy and the reform will have to be spread over a period of time. Education is a gradual process and the light may come from unexpected quarters of which the administration may know nothing and care even less.

For long an easy way out used to be to blame the British. (And, of course, send your own children and those of your near relations to the mission schools and to the western universities, too long in the West if you can afford it.) Such passing the buck will no longer work. You are the disease and not the doctor. It is obvious that education, like revolution, cannot be imported. But foreign experts can, how easily and oh, how often ! Education must be a growth of the soil, a part of national experience and awareness. One

reason for the poor quality of education in India today is its prolonged, one had almost said, its calculated rootlessness. Between the life of the people and the life in the university there is hardly any relation. In modern India "educated" has become almost a synonym for the de-nationalized. Sad, but true.

The phrase "National Education" is of course not unfamiliar, its protagonists too are fairly vocal. But except to give the idea a rabid or chauvinistic twist not many know what it means. National education is a psycho-social-universal concept and not a rallying point for reactionaries. In our recent past we had gone a step further. Our one-time plea for the "boycott of education" seems to have succeeded a little too well. Add to this the plethora of uncertain policies since independence. The present *mêlée* is not hard to understand.

"Faced with double-talk in high places and incoherence in the Establishment, and the desire for excellence almost burnt out, what does the teacher do?" Well, he can become a cynic. So many do. But a cynical teacher is a contradiction in terms. Many of them, if they are lucky, go and stay abroad. This deserters' policy, steadily on the increase, has led the Government to re-think the situation. The profession now seems to be crowded with a lot of climbers, many of whom are at the top of the tree or planning to be. Experts in the art of feathering their own nest, these are our committee men, delegation members, the great hobnobbers, the slick set, the tin-gods of today.

To have to suffer these glorified careerists, these nitwits and nincompoops, is enough to test any man's patience. In such a world, to expect the teachers—who have now been driven to adopt trade-union tactics in order to survive—to give a lead to an erring and fallen nation is to nurse an illusion. Fortunately, so few do.

And still here I am and I mean to stay. Like others I am not a stranger to the many frustrations of the profession: pettifoggery 'politics,' the incredible impostors, the nepotism, miscarriage of justice, above all, the sense of unachieve-

ment, having to live a life of low potential, the uncreative routine existence, the sad, wasted years. What is it, then, that holds us? Hard to say. Let me try. For one thing, teaching keeps you alert. There is no slipping. Be sure you will be found out, even if the students are too polite to tell it to your face. When it is genuine teaching helps to clarify one's motive, thought and conduct. It is, or could be, a purifying relationship. If you are lucky, the beauty of holiness might be yours.

As a wise woman once put it, backed by the strength of her own example, teaching is sacerdocy. You cannot live with the young without learning something new all the time. And once the rapport has been established, the gifts come crowding. What the teacher offers the young and through them to the community is more than a skill, it is an attitude and a way of life. That is why not only what you give but how you give becomes important. The teacher, willynilly, has to embody a lot of impossible categorial imperatives. Briefly, he must be a hero and a saint. Tall talk? No, we are the stuff of which martyrs are made. This I believe, if not know. Perhaps not I alone

But, for me as no doubt for others, that which outweighs every other consideration is the gift of youth which is always ours. To be allowed, all one's life, the richest treasures of nature, history and society, the young of the race, is something we would not exchange for anything else. And to be able, however slightly, to light up their way through a world as full of meaning as a mystery, of agony and ecstasy, for myself, I would ask no other reward—than to be worthy of the task. I would ask for no other reward than the flash in their eyes, the smile on their lips, and, now and then, those interminable debates that go on for hours, only to be continued at the next encounter. A teacher who has not had this reward, this mutual enrichment, is to be pitied. He had better look within. We receive but what we give. What have we given?

In a world well lost or given over to chaos, casualness and contingency, the teacher, as I see him, is our solitary saviour.

even if he may not be always among the saved. A channel through which a little knowledge of reality filters down to our world of ignorance and illusion, the teacher belongs to a minority necessary for the well-being of any society. The work he does is not only 'noble' as we are often assured, it is also vital, vivid and satisfying. Education is an essential, all-time service. Culture is always threatened by anarchy. A civilization on trial need not be reminded of that.

To lead the growing soul through the sub-rational and the rational to whatever may lie beyond is the teacher's ultimate and incalculable service to the race. But, how can one give what one does not have? *That* is the dilemma of the modern teacher. Here is the real sense of the betrayal of the intellectual, that he has become an opportunist because he has lost faith. He stands for values which he no longer represents. It is the paradox of the leader who has lost the art of leading. Only when the teacher becomes the living voice of a new order, a system of values shall we be nearer anything like an educated community. So far we have had only partially educated men and partially educated societies. The challenge, traced to its roots, is part of an evolutionary crisis, a fundamental issue. An integral education is the need of the hour. We must learn to feel the need before it can be supplied. Is the present disaffection a symptom of that coming change? In that case our trials will not have been in vain. To bring that day nearer, the prospect of an educated humanity, the hope of an integral education, is every teacher's dream, his pearl of great price.

The Government is not blind to these problems. It has already done something by way of the University Grants Commission, the improvement of salaries, setting up of national laboratories, scholarship schemes and other forms of grants-in-aid, etc. Without minimizing these efforts one must add that, in the last analysis, education involves an impalpable factor: the creation of a climate of opinion and purposive activity. Can you legislate idealism? What you are speaks out louder than what you say or do. A sustained idealism and enthusiasm, the silent sacrifice of the many for

decades, perhaps for generations is the only answer to the anarchy of our days. Such faith and works alone can lift the curse of misdirection of energies and the bitterness everywhere. The edifice of education is not built in a day. And since the Government is bound to be less pliant, personal and progressive than its most enlightened citizens, the teacher may find himself reduced to the barren role of a negative critic, a voice in the wilderness, an outsider, the insider out. This is inevitable but it also defines his true function, to kick against the pricks if necessary.

Today the teacher may be alone. But alone or together he does what none else can. And he does it because he can no other. In the race between catastrophe and education he is our last hope.

HURST JOHN SPEAKING

The Sunday meeting at the Unitarian chapel had just finished. A few of us had gathered round the coffee counter. The place was humming with small talk, while children bustled about, crying, shouting, or splurged their way through the crowd with that complete self-absorption that made the adult so insignificant.

It was all very relaxed. I was thinking of leaving when, out of nowhere, strode the Colossus towards me. I had heard of him before, and his visit to Schweitzer in dark Africa, on the edge of the primeval forest. Now here was Hurst John in person. It was too late to withdraw. He had caught me in his tight grip. I almost squirmed. But the quick unfeigned smile took all the pain away.

Strongly built, with a receding forehead, and eyes that easily looked into yours, he had a man's eager grasp. You could trust it and the owner. And the conversation—that's what I want to tell you about. He knew how to talk, that is to speak, not just to make conversation with polite meaningless words. He also knew how to draw the best in you. Or how else did I open my lips so freely ?

He looked to me like one who had been tested in fire, one who had worked his way through and did not have to think out his thoughts any longer, certainly had little need to look clever. Or may be in some secret hour, which the clock knows not of, he had thought them all, with pity in his eyes and pain in his heart. And so while the storm raged outside, he stood his ground, fixed firmly in Being. For that never failed.

Our next meeting was a little unexpected, but no less rewarding.

Midday.

Downtown

Drizzle.

We, poor pedestrians, were standing near a crossing, waiting for the cars to pass by. But one of the cars apparently would not move. In fact, somebody from inside was making good-humoured but strange gestures. (So many do, strang-err gestures) I hadn't noticed it at first. My young companion drew my attention, for these were supposed to be addressed to me "Look, there's somebody waving to you." There he was and no mistake. With an Astrakhan on, he looked like some Bedouin chief or an oil king from Kuwait. The side door opened and we two slid in, like school-boys getting a free ride.

"So we've met I have been thinking of you, you know," I said rather foolishly.

"Yes, I believe you. And you know why we have met We always manage to do what we want to do."

When Hurst John speaks like that you are impressed Because he is not trying to impress or sound sententious.

"Yes, we have always met," I said, taking shelter behind a deep quotation. And then I added, almost to myself, but hoping that I might be overheard, "To know of some one here and there whom we accord with, who is living on with us, even in silence--this makes our earthly ball a peopled garden."

"That's a quotation."

"How did you know?"

"Sounded like one. Or do you speak like that often?" he added with a tolerant twinkle. "Whom by?"

"Goethe by, sez I"

"Hm" It was now his turn to quote. "But the knowledge must be used, must be shared, and one mustn't delay.

Loosest day loitering,

'Twill be the same tomorrow

And the next more dilatory
 Each indecision brings its own delay
 What you can, or think you can,
 Begin it
 Boldness has genius,
 Power and magic in it
 Only engage and the mind grows heated,
 Begin it and the work will be completed "

"Ah, yes But who begins it ? One reads, hears, and even manages to speak or write precious things and yet—look at the world ! " I said, rather despondently.

"Yes, look at the world Always look at the world But why are you surprised ? These excellent words aren't always that excellent Very often they are dried thought, or maybe they haven't found their soil and must bide their time In the meantime one must live, according to one's light You cannot borrow another's "

"No, you can't Be ye a light unto yourselves, were the last words of the Buddha "

"Also perhaps his first But even thought can be living, leaping, a source of union and strength "

"How ? "

"Oh, you know Thought is not meant to separate Not all thought, anyway The mind stuff is the same in all men It is only the ego that divides Recently I had been to Baltimore airport, and was talking to a young lady at the counter She was very quiet and attentive Then I knew 'Why do you read my mind, my dear ? ' I asked her She wasn't a bit embarrassed 'My mother and I are clairvoyantes We rarely talk to each other, don't need to ' Mind-reading is easy and would make nonsense of much of our present way of living Perhaps that is why people are so unwilling to admit it Two to three thousand years from now those who read and write may come to be known as the illiterates A bad day for the universities," he added

"Why, they might take up research projects, ESP, Astronauts of Awareness " I did not wish to betray the profession *La trahison des clercs !*

"I doubt. Most of the real research will be done, I am afraid, outside the academic haunts. As had once been done in your country."

"Well, yes. How often one feels that there are other ways of knowing than the ones we employ. Every child knows it and yet we ignore these and destroy the child's natural growth with an overdose of verbalism."

"The blind leading the blind," was his simple comment.

"It would be a great day if we could prove the direct operation of the mind upon matter and of course upon other minds. It can be done."

"It is already under way, though the wise know not."

Sandwiched between the two of us, our young friend was feeling a bit dazed at all this occult exchange. He was specializing in meat technology. But this was strong meat even for him. But how he was drinking in every word! Perhaps his presence was a secret stimulus to both of us. We all crave for an audience, few but select. Though sceptical, he was the ideal audience, and we were both grateful to him. For a moment our eyes met.

Looking at Hurst John I felt that he had walked by the razor's edge, borne that deep wound which all must bear who dare to look too deeply into life, that he had been kneaded into shape by some unseen hand. What *was* that experience? Some old familiar tale or battle long ago? But it was more than idle curiosity that prompted me to ask him: "What experience has counted for most in your life?"

"What experience?" He looked out for a while, trying to think and then as if he had made up his mind, "Larry boy," he said simply. (Larry was his young son, a cerebral palsy victim. I didn't know it then. It was a revelation to watch the tender care with which he looked after, played with the cripple child—but that is another story.) "What he has done is to give me the responsibility of realizing how important every person on earth is. This includes every animal, plant and substance. I say this without any eulogy, for if it were a eulogy it would be useless and wasteful. Larry boy within a few years made me realize that what you

are, as you are, where you are, is important. More important than what you are not, have not been and will not be. With this realization comes a clear view of the individual, each individual and his ability to respond is his responsibility."

"Do you know," I asked him, "of any method for creating this sense of responsibility in the individual?"

"I suspect it is related with the area of one's interest and experience, in which you wish to stand up to be counted or not to be counted in the flow of events. A ball does not bounce unless it hits the ground firmly. The harder it hits the ground the higher it bounces. So, I would say that everything that happens to us is either a stepping stone or a stumbling-block. It entirely depends on how we approach it. And we should be thankful for every challenge, especially when it is a big one."

* He certainly had met his challenge. In America, I had noticed, conformity was being talked of everywhere. Many felt that the old pioneering spirit was gone and keeping up with the Joneses had become almost a religion. "What is your view of conventions and traditions?" I asked him. "Do you think they are a help ? Or a challenge?"

"Well, I do not refuse to admit a custom or convention just because it is one. But I am bound by neither. I judge its value in terms of the help it gives me to achieve freedom. That is what matters."

"So, you would say that freedom is—".

"Is Spirit, the flow of that which evolves, and moves through all that is and is yet to be."

"Its proof?"

"In experience."

"Would you agree that our normal experience contains plenty of proof or indication of this?"

"Yes, but to a sensitive soul normal experience may not be what you call normal. It is the same key that opens both Heaven and Hell. Larry boy was the challenge that forced

me to search what relationship fundamental values really had to me, my life."

"Would you call it love ? sympathy ?"

"Why not ? Love is the definition, the word for what flows between people and between experiences. Love springs out of one's total self with the intent that it may be of service, but it requires not a response."

"I understand." And I quoted Blake's well known lines.

Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a heaven in hell's despair.

"Would it be right to say that you have learned much from children ?" I asked.

"Yes, in a way. In the essence of a child is all learning. All thinking is humble. No, not all thinking. (Bringing out a book from the shelf) The deepest thinking is humble."

"If you had your way in planning children's education how would you do it ?"

"Opposite of the way it is done now."

"Care to explain ?"

"True teaching is a blending of shared experience, in thought and action. One of the greatest hazards of present-day education is that it does not require participation along with the mental process. In other words, it creates a vacuum of pseudo-intellectualism in which the accumulation of information is considered enough to call oneself educated, whereas one's ability to do things may be non-existent. And since it is by your ability to work that we realize values, the poor showing made by the intellectuals is easily explained. The educated have got away from the living reality. Granted that some kind of activity may numb one's sensitivity to some of the beauties that one cherishes, yet in proper quantities it can orient one more fully with the world around and make of one's experience a harmony with all things. When Jesus said that the Truth would make you

free, he was not thinking of the mechanics of education, a master at one end and a pupil at the other. Or of information. He was speaking of the here and now, the instant of being, when you know the truth and are free. And this knowing, this truth, is a sense of understanding which comes with the awareness of our relationship with all that exists, all that has ever been and all that is ever likely to exist. This is the sense of at-onc-ment, awesome, inspiring and unbelievably simple."

"Do you know of any scholar or teacher who is practising this idea, or putting his experience into practice?"

"If I did, I would go to him." Then, after a pause, "Schweitzer has, I suppose. But he did not do it on his own, just because he had intended to do so. It was the natives of Africa that lifted him out of his four doctors' degree and taught him the simple Reverence for Life in the most child-like native way. He has been trying a life-time, a most marvellous life-time, to relate this to his intellectual discipline. In his camp at Lambaréné you find a mixture of Prussian autocracy, fatherly devotion, native intuition and childlike humility."

"What did you get out of your meeting with Schweitzer? And why did you go out to meet him?" I pursued the point. This was an old question that I had long thought of asking him.

"Huh-Huh. And you say you have only two hours to spare! Well, I'll tell you. When I was in New York in 1956 I saw on the newsstand at the Grand Central Station a magazine I had never seen before, *Wisdom*. On the cover page was a face, a very striking face. I was curious enough to pick up the magazine. On thumbing thru I found that it was Albert Schweitzer. I read a few of the things he had written. These spoke of the experiences that I've had. It was exciting to realize that here was another person who had those wonderfully clean insights. I felt that it would be a good thing to talk with him and, may be in a meagre way, share with him what he had experienced." He stopped for a moment.

"But," he continued, "he was in Africa and I was busy. Procrastination set in. Guess I would like to meet him, but . . . 1957 found me saying the same thing. So did '58. I was telling a friend, at lunch, how I would like to meet Schweitzer. 'One of these days you will have waited too long,' he said. 'He is already past eighty.' The shock of that challenge caused me to visit Schweitzer that very year. Within a month I had received my passport, my vaccination, my return ticket to Africa and back. Experience like these made me realize, once more, that every person on earth does exactly what he intends to do, every minute of every day."

I changed the topic. "Is America doing the right thing by itself, every minute of every day?"

"I doubt it."

"What would you say is wrong with America?"

"The basic error of America is — gluttonous selfishness."

"Wherefrom did this come?"

"By assuming that money is all-important. I'd say that America has distorted its measuring stick so completely that it thinks that money and speed and time are more important than understanding and harmony and service. Because of this America will destroy itself unless it changes its direction. Because this selfishness will consume everything until there is nothing to consume, and then it will consume itself. Whether or not it will be possible to swing the pendulum the other way before it is too late is something I cannot say. But we who believe that human values are natural values, and worthy of our effort, find it essential to do what each of us can do, to swing the pendulum, whatever the cost. Or, to stay the pendulum, let us put it that way, hoping that those who follow may find it worthy of their effort too and that which was on the brink — of self-destruction — could instead have been put to act as a force for good and unselfish devotion."

"Do you see any hope?"

"To believe is to have hope, even if at this juncture there is so much blindness everywhere that one cannot tell how it is all going to happen. Faith is blind, and believing asks not : Is it possible ? It only asks : How can it be done ?"

"Meeting and talking to people, how do you feel? Can it be done?"

"We must believe so. Individually and with groups that I've met I have found wonderful understanding. Yet our lip-service has become so much more powerful that our dedication suffers. The mechanics of our activity leaves little or nothing for creative dynamics which will shape tomorrow's freedom."

Tomorrow's freedom would include the East as well as the West. So, I asked him: "Do you believe that the East and the West are really separate?"

"No, I do not believe that the East and the West are really different, except in minor details. Granted some of our experiences are different, what is true in the West is true in the East and vice versa. What preserves and perpetuates this difference is something else. I know," and how sad the voice sounded, "that one of the greatest dangers of our times is the glorified gossip column or medium known as the newspaper or the magazine, in which men use their talents to pass judgment and to criticize and magnify the opinions they have of another way of life or people or government, thereby setting in motion ill-wills and distortions that reverberate all the way down through the experiences of all those who read and talk about these. If we could find a way to sweep clean these gossiping judgments so that the real experiences of the people could be shared, there would be no need for conflict on a personal scale or on a national scale."

"May I ask you a last question?"

"Why last? Ask."

"If you had to draft a Manifesto for Man how would you do it?"

"Manifesto?" He was clearly puzzled. "First I would apologize for the weakness of my words, for how could I use words sufficiently clear so that these might not mean what I never intended? I would have to be humble. Frankly, I have begun to doubt the written word. I feel it is already static when it is recorded like that. I can understand why Christ or any of the ancient Masters did not feel it worth his

while to have anything recorded. Anything written is probably some form of monumental effort in the hope that someone else might realize that you too have walked the same path. I was delighted with the answer that Mahatma Gandhi had given to Miss Holt when she had asked him how best she could teach religion to the students of Stephens College and the University of Missouri. He had answered, Dear Lady, you do not teach religion, you live it."

We both smiled. He continued: "The sooner we can be about the art of living our experiences and sharing our love and understanding and energies with every soul we meet, the more will we be worthy of even the hope that we might be on the right track."

And that brought us to the journey's end. Our "loitering" day was over. As he dropped me near my apartment his face turned grave and astonishingly humble

"I treat this," he said simply, "with humility. If you've found any understanding in these words of mine, well, that is the simple joy of shared experience." After a brief pause he added slowly: "If we become callous, insensitive, we lose much of the flow of life, we are truly half-dead."

"When will the dead awaken?" I asked him lightly.

In answer he only smiled. Soon his car sped out of my sight. As I walked back to my room Tagore's lines came back to me:

Away from the crowd
I have pursued my fancies
and found my solitary friends,
whose light and voice make
history
the heroes and seekers after
truth,
inheritors of life everlasting

Hurst John is one of these men, who belong to all times and to no time, a link in the chain of Being. The fact that such men exist renews our faith in living, to make of life an opportunity, to make goodness articulate, to make virtue a

fact. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger, the words of the Indian poet echoed in my mind as I mounted up the creaking stairs to my attic on the second floor.

IN LAMBARE'NE' AN ANCIENT MAN

Le grand docteur, le père de tous nous

It all happened in France.

. A high school lad had been asked : "How would you define the best hope for the culture of the West?" In answer he had written : "It is not in any part of Europe. It is in a small African village and it can be identified with an eighty-two-year (now eighty-seven) old man." * The old man is Albert Schweitzer.

It is true that both his evangelical activities and theology have their critics. But, all in all in recent years few men have caught or deserved more of the public mind as the "jungle doctor" at Lambaréné, in equatorial Africa. None perhaps has succeeded so well, by the example of one's life and thought, in making us aware of the real issues of our times. None, like him, in taking upon himself the thankless task of reviving the lost sense of Reverence for Life and the Christian ethic of love-in-action. Even more than his scholarship in many fields, it is his humanity that has made the greatest impact. As the Dean of Canterbury put it, the humanity of the man predominates over all other elements. He has shocked us with the simple truth that sincerity is the foundation of the spiritual life and that civilization without ethics spells disaster. The Grand Doctor is already a legend, the one man in whom western conscience has become articulate. His mission has been nothing less than to revive, by his writing and example, the lost purposes of western civilization. But why western alone? Today he stands as a human symbol, as an affirmation of the spirit of sacrifice, as one whom we must not only adore but understand and, if

* The essay was originally written a year before Schweitzer passed away.

possible, emulate. In a corrupt and condemned civilization he offers us a faith for living. And himself he lives it.

And what a life ! The sickly sensitive child that grew to be a sturdy young man, and if anything a sturdier old man ; the doctor—in music, theology and philosophy—who gave up a congenial “triple career”, at thirty, himself a member of the university staff, joined as a student of medicine to qualify and go out as a missionary doctor to the darkest Africa and has worked there all these years ; withal found time to keep up with his music and contemplation ; to whom the Nobel Peace Prize was but an occasion to be utilized for setting up a leper colony near his hospital ; an ascetic who shaves without soap or lather, and writes his manuscripts on scraps of used paper of all shapes, sizes and colours and hangs them up on the wall like trophies.

• Young Schweitzer, he tells us himself, had always been sensitive to pain and suffering. Even as a child he had heard the evening bell toll the message : “Thou shalt not kill.” And at night the child would add a personal prayer to the one he had been taught by his mother ; “O good Lord, protect and bless all things that breathe, preserve all living things from evil and suffer them to sleep in peace.” His whole life has been one long prayer. No wonder in later life he spoke of “The Fellowship of Those who Bear the Mark of Pain.” These are all “those who have learned by experience what physical pain and bodily anguish mean. They belong together, all the world over, they are united by a secret bond.” How close his thought comes to the Indian concept will be seen from this entry : “We have no right to inflict suffering and death on another living creature unless there is some unavoidable necessity for it, and that we ought all of us to feel what a horrible thing it is to cause suffering and death out of mere thoughtlessness.”

The sense of pain and suffering impressed him so strongly that early in life he questioned himself about his right to personal happiness while others suffered. It became almost an obsession. As a young man he took an important decision, which he has since followed : he would spend the next

ten years in studying science, music and theology (he wanted to be a preacher) and then give himself up to the service of his fellowmen. The exact nature of the service was not clear. Another ten years had to pass before he knew what his vocation was going to be.

In the meantime his thesis on the interpretations of the Last Supper went ahead. Nor was music neglected. During his visits to Paris he would be busy taking lessons from two different but talented teachers. He has described humorously how in the morning he would play à la Jaell and in the evening à la Philipp. Then came his philosophical thesis on Kant, which won him a quick reputation in academic circles. His later obiter dicta on Kant is revealing: so much system and so little compassion. A little later he was appointed lecturer and pastor at Strassbourg. It was all a life of agreeable activity and diversion. His sermons, by the way, were invariably short, a contrast to the existing practice. When someone had complained about this, he had said, "I am a poor pastor who stops talking when he has nothing else to say."

After some time he began his book on Bach, the musician-poet, as he calls him. This work had been suggested by a friend and soon became a classic. But the promise had not been forgotten. While on a short visit to Paris his eyes fell on an article in *Journal Des Missions Evangeliques* (1944). The article lamented the lack of trained personnel in Africa and begged some one "on whom the Master's eyes already rested" to respond. "Men and women who can reply simply to the Master's call, 'I am coming,' these are the people the church needs." Whether the church needed him or not Albert Schweitzer chose to be that man. In this he has but followed the line of ancient apostles who, at Christ's call, "straightaway forsook their nets and followed."

Only in his case it could not be straightaway. He had first to train for the job, he had to study medicine. It was not an easy decision to make, or uphold. Friends, nearly everyone, protested and tried their best to argue him out of it. He was ruining his career, they said. He could help the

cause better by staying in Europe, said others. Even he knew that it would not be easy to do what he had fiercely set his heart upon doing. "Theology and music were more or less natural language to me. But medicine!" But he would not give up so easily. His medical studies took seven long years.

During all these years his other interests were not forgotten. The Bach book was expanded for a German edition. The original had been written in French. An Alsatian, he is bi-lingual. In 1906 he sprang another surprise: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, a piece of dramatic and controversial research which placed him at the upper ledge of the theological hierarchy. As though this was not enough, he also completed an important work on organ building, his lifelong passion. "In Africa he saves old niggers, in Europe old organs," said a friend in after years. Still later came the book on St Paul.

But the old resolve was there. All the time. In the end, in 1912, he gave up his double post as pastor and lecturer at Strassbourg. It was at this time that he married Helene Bresslau, who shared his ideas and had trained to be a nurse to be able to help him in his work. Before leaving he had to go to Paris to train himself in colonial medicine. While there, he gave some music recitals and with the money earned he published his medical thesis, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, which upheld the normalcy of Jesus against puerile charges made from the psycho-analytic quarters. But the book did not, obviously, please the orthodox.

Schweitzer had decided to build his hospital at Lambaréné. But there were snags. He was a German and the area belonged to the French. There were other difficulties as well. His theological work had raised controversy and the Colonial authorities felt apprehensive. Schweitzer had to assure them that so far as theology was concerned he would be *muet comme une carpe*, silent as a carp, a promise which he has kept.

But why did he choose Africa? Hear his own words: "Ever since the world's far-off lands were discovered, what has been the relation of the white people to the coloured?"

What's the meaning of the simple fact that this and that people have died out and that the condition of others is getting worse because they were 'discovered' by men who professed to be followers of Jesus? Who can measure the misery produced by the fiery liquids and hideous diseases that we have brought to them?" "We are burdened with a great debt," he continues, "we are not free to confer or not to confer benefits on these people as we please. It is our duty. Anything we give them is not benevolence but atonement. That is the foundation from which all deliberations about 'work of mercy' must begin." He is, one might say, atoning for the sins of a sordid un-Christian between imperialism

On March 29, 1913, Schweitzer sailed for Africa. On arrival an extraordinary prospect opened up before him: "River and primeval forest . . . Who can ever describe the first impression? . . . We seemed to be dreaming. An ancient landscape, which elsewhere had seemed the creation of man's fancy, had already sprung to life. . . . A vast tangle of roots. . . . fields of papyrus as high as a man with greasy fan-shaped leaves. Every gap in the forest . . . a blinding mirror of water. . . . A heron flies up heavily, only to settle on a dead stump. Tiny blue birds are skimming over the water, and high above us a pair of ospreys are circling over the water. We have arrived in Africa!"

Shortly after arrival he explained, in a moving document, why he had given up his career and chosen this life. "I had read about the physical miseries of the natives in the virgin forests: I had heard about them from the missionaries, and the more I thought about it, the stranger it seemed to me that we Europeans trouble so little about the great humanitarian task which offers itself to us in far off lands. The parable of Dives and Lazarus seemed to me to have spoken directly to us! We are Dives, for, through the advance of medical science, we now know a great deal about diseases and pain, and have innumerable means of fighting them. Yet we take as a matter of course the incalculable advantages which the new wealth gives us. Out there in the colonies, however, sits Lazarus, the coloured folk, who suffers

from illness and pain just as much as we do, nay, much more, and has absolutely no means of fighting them. And just as Dives sinned against the poor man at his gate because for want of thought he never put himself in his place and let his heart and conscience tell what he ought to do so do we sin against the poor man at our gate."

There was activity in the hospital from the beginning and it has not ceased since then. He had been prepared for hard work but this was going to be harder than any he had known or been prepared for. But of course he would not give in or give up. Operations were held under primitive conditions in the open. Strange to tell most of these were successful and earned for the Doctor the unenviable title of *Oganga*, witch doctor or fetish man. The natives trusted him from the start.

But when there was no hospital work? How would he spend the time? There were his private thoughts of course. But music, his first love? The Paris Bach Society sent him a piano with an organ pedal. It was a godsend. The Doctor was deeply touched. But at first he did not think of using it. There were other things to do, and really where was the time? He kept away from it, as much as he could. But one evening, after the day's work was over, he sat down before the instrument, and before he knew what he was doing, he had started to play a Bach fugue. It soothed him and helped him to work better. So he could now play without a qualm. The effect on the listeners is best described in the words of one of the nurses. "After the day's duties he plays on the piano with organ pedals and from our rooms, in the silence of the night and in the midst of the big forest, we enjoy the most perfect recitals. The music hours are a comfort and inner help. They meant so much to me during the years of separation from home."

Away from public gaze the work continued, in fulfilment of a vow. Then came World War I, which he had anticipated. His routine and freedom of movement were restricted. But the period was not without result, for it was during this period of enforced idleness that he found out,

almost, by accident, what he had been seeking all these years, "the original bonds uniting the affirmative attitude towards the world with ethics." It came suddenly as he was being rowed upstream to attend a missionary's wife in trouble. "Lost in thought I sat on the deck of the barge, struggling to find the elementary and universal conception of the ethical which I had not discovered in any philosophy. Sheet after sheet I covered with disconnected sentences, merely to keep myself concentrated on the problem. Late on the third day, at the very moment when, at sunset, we were making our way through a herd of hippopotamuses, there flashed upon my mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase 'Reverence for Life'. The iron door had yielded; the path in the thicket had become visible. Now I had found my way to the idea in which affirmation of the world and ethics were contained side by side! Now I know that the ethical acceptance of the world and of life, together with the ideals of civilization contained in this concept, has a foundation in thought." His *Philosophy of Civilization* was in the making.

But soon all these contemplative and medical activities were rudely interrupted. He was moved to Europe, virtually under arrest. At first he had been under a kind of house arrest, but now he was taken away to internee camps in France and Switzerland. In course of being moved about from place to place, he was once put up in the room that Van Gogh had occupied during his insanity and of which he has left some terrifying pictures. Schweitzer recognized the room with a mild shock. But the discovery of Aristotle's *Politics* in his bag made the French police apprehensive of the doctor's bonafide. "Why, it's incredible," cried the NCO, "they're actually bringing political books into a prisoner-of-war camp!"

Released later, he went home. He was not in the best of health, his wife was even worse. There, while he was tinkering with his projected work on the *Philosophy of Civilization* an unexpected invitation came from Archbishop Soderblom at Upsala University. This proved to be a blessing. Not only was he most enthusiastically received—once

under the strain his voice broke—but he recovered his earlier energy and enthusiasm and threw himself into renewed and redoubled activity. These lectures and recitals—he was and still is one of the finest Bach players in the world—brought money badly needed for the work in Africa as well as to pay off some old debts.

II

The war over, Albert Schweitzer returned to Lambaréné. As advised by Soderblom he completed the record of his African experience. *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, he called it. The book was quickly translated into English, Dutch, French, Danish and Finnish. It revealed not only what he owed to Africa ("Solitude of the primeval forest, how can I thank you enough for what you have been to me?"), it was also full of shrewd observations on the problems of African education, diseases and the new habits and patterns of change in the colonies, due to the inroads of "civilization". The saddest of all, as he had noted, was "the tragic fact that the interests of colonization and those of civilization do not always run parallel". *Multum in parvo*. Colonial problems, he has always urged, cannot be solved by political measures alone. Above all, it is or ought to be a human problem. A new element is needed, white and coloured must meet in an atmosphere of the ethical spirit. A voice in the wilderness? It has always been the same. How does the *Mahabharata* end?

In 1921 he was once more back in Europe. A long tour of North Europe, England and Switzerland followed, there was a special performance of St Matthews Passion before the Spanish monarchy. In the spring of 1923 the first two volumes of the *Philosophy of Civilization* came out: *The Decay and Restoration of Civilization* and *Civilization and Ethics*. The titles are indicative of his interest and approach. But while correcting proofs he was already packing for the return trip to Africa. On return, in 1924, he found, as he had feared, the hospital buildings in shambles.

He had to begin the work over again. His life alternated, he tells us simply without bitterness, between that of a doctor in the morning and a master builder in the afternoon. By autumn, 1925, the hospital had become once more a workable proposition and looked even better than before. But problems of medicine, accommodation and staff continued to plague him as they do even now. Later on a new building was completed in 1927. After this he permitted himself another break in Europe. Again, in 1931, he had to go to Frankfurt to give the lecture on the hundredth anniversary of Goethe. Goethe had been his favourite reading and he put himself into the work. The address, grave and timely, pointed to the state of the world in terms of Goethe's prognostication : "The cottage of Philomen and Baucis burns with a thousand tongues of flame ! In deeds of violence and murders a thousandfold, a brutalized humanity plays its cruel game ! Mephistopheles leers at us with a thousand grimaces ! In a thousand different ways mankind has been persuaded to give up its natural relations with reality, and to seek its welfare in the magic formulas of some kind of economic and social witchcraft in which the possibility of freedom itself from social and economic bonds is only still further removed !

"And the tragic meaning of these magic formulas, to whatever kind of economic and social witchcraft they may belong, is always just this, that the individual must give up his own material and spiritual personality and must live only as one of the spiritually restless and materialistic multitude which claims control over him."

The Goethe lecture was followed by another tour of England. This included recitals, much lecturing and receiving quite a few honorary degrees, from centres of learning, old and new. The universities wanted him, and he had to go again, to Edinburgh for the Gifford Lectures and to Oxford for the Hibbert. The Oxford lectures opened with a startling illustration. His theme was "Religion in Modern Civilization." He brought it home at once. "I am going to discuss religion in the spiritual life and civilization of our time.

The first question to be faced, therefore, is: Is religion a force in the spiritual life of our age? I answer in your name and mine, No. . . . There is a longing among many who no longer belong to the churches. I rejoice to concede this. And yet we must hold fast to the fact that religion is not a force. The proof? The war."

In 1934 was published *Indian Thought and Its Development*. It is tempting to pick holes in it, especially the suggestion that Indian thought is a form of world-negation. What about *Lila*, the world as the Lord's play? What about *ihava*, here and now? But perhaps more important than this and other suggestions was his observation that there "must arise a philosophy profounder and more living than our own, and one possessed of greater spiritual and ethical power. In the terrible age through which mankind is passing, all of us, both in the East and the West, must watch for the coming of a more perfect and healthier form of thought which will conquer men's hearts and compel all people to acknowledge its sway. And it must be our aim to bring this philosophy into existence."

Increasing national jealousy and hatred had brought a very different philosophy into armed action. Came the Second World War, which he had uncannily foreseen. He had instinctively felt war in the air and refused to unpack his bag and returned from Europe in a hurry, in order to be near his hospital. But there was fighting in Africa too. Be it said to the credit of the warring parties that both had agreed to spare the hospital area. The war however led to a new contact or convert. American interest in Schweizer was aroused and has not declined since. Money, medical supplies and equipment (and journalists) have followed in increasing waves. It was, as the Doctor said, a splendid surprise.

When finally the news of the cessation of hostilities reached him Schweizer was busy with his daily round and could not stop to think. "Not until evening could I begin to think and imagine the meaning of the end of hostilities. While the palms were gently rustling outside in the darkness, I took from the shelf my little book with the sayings of Lao-

Tse, the great Chinese thinker of the sixth century B. C. and read his impressive words on war and victory : 'Weapons are disastrous implements, no tools for a noble being. Only when he cannot do otherwise, does he make use of them. Quiet and peace are for him the highest ideal. He conquers, but he knows no joy in it. He who would rejoice in victory, would be rejoicing in murder. At the victory celebration, the general should take his place as at funeral ceremonies. The slaughter of human beings in great numbers should be lamented with tears of compassion. Therefore should he, who has conquered in battle, bear himself as if he were at a festival of mourning'." One is reminded of the Asokan edict after the Kalinga War.

In 1948 he re-visited Europe for a short period. Next year he was at last persuaded to visit America. This was in connection with the Goethe centenary. There were of course many other invitations, financially tempting. Most of these he declined.

Three years later as he was working in none too clean clothes on a roof top a man from Sweden announced himself.

"I have come from Stockholm, Sir—."

"All right, hold the end of the roof," replied Schweitzer.

The emissary did his best. A little later he managed to explain his presence. The Nobel Prize Committee had chosen Schweitzer for the Peace Prize and wanted to know if he would be willing to go to Sweden and when.

"I'll come. Not now, but when I can. And give them my thanks. I'll use the money for the leprosarium."

He went to Oslo two years later. The Nobel Prize speech summed up the thoughts of a lifetime : "The human spirit is not dead, it lives in solitude. The human spirit knows that compassion, in which all ethics must be rooted, only attains its full flowering when it embraces all living creatures and is not only concerned with mankind Man has become a superman but he suffers from a fatal imperfection. He is not raised to a superhuman level of understanding which corresponds to the possession of superhuman strength. . . . So it happens that the advance of science,

instead of being advantageous to him, has proved fatal to him. . . . We can no longer evade the problem of the future of mankind. . . . The important thing is that all of us should acknowledge that we are guilty of inhumanity. The horror of that avowal must arouse us from our torpor, and compel us to hope and work for an age where there will be no war."

And then, as quickly as possible, he returned to Africa. There he still is, ploughing his lonely furrow, atoning for our cumulative guilt of inhumanity. The great have always been lonely, strongest when alone. Like some elemental elder brother he keeps watch over all of us, busy in childhood as in age, "to protect and bless all things that breathe, preserve all living things from evil and suffer them to sleep in peace."

Brotherhood ! No word said can make you brothers !
Brotherhood only the brave earn and by danger or
Harm or by bearing hurt and by no other.
Brotherhood in the strange world is the rich and
Rarest giving of life and the most valued
Not to be had for a word or a week's wishing.

If, as a recent visitor to Lambaréné was moved to say, at a time when men possess the means of demolishing a planet the only business that makes sense is the business of inspired purpose, few modern thinkers have served that purpose so well as Schweitzer, "extraordinary jungle doctor." From the edge of the primeval forest, his twentieth-century *scvashram*, the Promethean poet and practical visionary has led in the unwearied battle against all forms of thoughtlessness—"With the spirit of the age I am in complete disagreement, because it is filled with disdain for thinking"—and the universal decline of civilization. None has raised higher the banner of *Dharma*. In his own words, "If the ethical is the essential element in civilization, decadence changes into renaissance as soon as as the ethical activities are set to work again in our convictions and in the ideas which we undertake to stamp upon reality. The attempt to bring this about is well worth making, and it should be worldwide."

A *Sanatana*, spiritual immortal, Schweitzer has made that attempt, solo. His life is his strongest argument, and he invites us all to the same undertaking.

"How long are you going to go on working like this?" his wife had asked.

"As long as I can draw breath," was the Doctor's answer. And he added: "I am tired, and there is much work to do, too much."

Could not the Government of India, with a philosopher and a humanitarian at the helm, do something about it, give some kind of recognition to the Grand Doctor's services to truth, non-violence and humanity? If the tight-fisted French Academy could offer him a seat of honour among the Immortals, can not India, which shares so many of his ideals, do something in the matter? * Let us do it before it becomes too late. How long shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?

In the meantime let us salute the Olympian where he keeps company with the companionless, among the poorest, the lowliest and the lost.

* Recently a village in Gujarat has been dedicated to his memory.

SWAMI IN AMERICA

Don't expect anything and life will be full of pleasant surprises, said Bernard Shaw. We found that out, unexpectedly, one afternoon in San Francisco by the Golden Gate.

We knew the local Vedanta Centre held Sunday classes or lectures. My young host and I were headed for one of these. This week's topic, of all topics, was on *The Dark Night of the Soul*. The Centre was miles off from the place where we lived. On Sundays the buses ran late and few. We missed connections and in the end had to walk seven blocks up a steep slope. Footsore, when the pilgrims arrived the lecture had already begun. Quietly we took our seat in a corner.

The hall, or chapel, was fully packed, with what looked like the cream of the crop. Shining, friendly faces. We watched the ageing Swami hold forth. With his impressive ochre robe and a drawn face, that spoke of long vigils of the spirit, he looked like a combination of St. Francis and Savonarola. But what a wide-ranging discourse! Now touching upon subtle yogic techniques and the mysteries of the inner life, then on the Teenager and other American headaches, back to the *Dark Night*, its why and wherefore, back again to the disciplined life and the *Wisdom of the Ages*. We drank it all in. Some of the faces round us could only be called rapt. But even the longest lecture comes to an end. So did this, and we woke up to the everyday world about us. Most of those present, more women than men I believe, queued up to the Swami. We were standing a little apart and started speaking in the native woodnote wild. When, imagine our surprise, a young American, beard and all that,

turned round and inquired in corectest Bengali : "*Apnara ki Bangali, Are you Bengali ?*"

The fact was self-evident and could not be reasonably denied.

But how did he pick up Tagore's tongue ? That was the question that our bewildered looks must have told him. "Oh, I have spent some time in India. It is my true home. But, as yet, I can't speak it very well *Ektu-ektu*, only a little "

"Come, sir, don't be modest," said my young companion, meaning to be complimentary.

"Aren't you going to meet the Swami ?" he inquired.

No, we would be seeing him later But we would wait for him.

"Well, I won't be long "

In the meantime we turned to some of our countrymen, most students from Stanford, whom we had met on an earlier occasion. A lady in sari gently shd by In fact, the Consul General's wife

After a few minutes our American friend came back. He looked a little sad

"Oh, I'll have to come again The Swami was too busy to discuss my question "

"What question ?" My young friend was curious

"Simple. They have a big ranchlike Ashram at Olema I want to spend some time there doing *tapasya* "

We were both taken aback, but we kept the surprise to ourselves After all, we came from the land of *tapasya*, didn't we ?

"You have been interested in this kind of life for long "

"Yes, for years "

"Do you belong to an Order ?"

"Yes."

"Initiated ?"

"Yes".

"Where and by whom ?"

"Here, by my guru, Paramhansa Yogananda "

"Did he give you a new name ?"

"Yes, he did."

We didn't ask him for the new name. He must have understood. "He called me Bhaktiswarupananda," he said very quietly. There was a smile on his lips.

"Why do you smile?"

"I was wondering, meeting you like this. You know life for an American *sadhu* is not exactly easy * They think you are a vagrant, an un-American oddball. Well, it takes all sorts to make a world."

He seemed such good company that we did not like to let him go by so soon. As we were walking down the stairs we asked him if he had anything particular to do that afternoon. If not, did he mind joining us over a cup of coffee, or lunch? He had no objection. He would be glad to spend some time with us. He had an appointment with Dr. Chaudhuri. Did we know Dr. Chaudhuri? This made us smile, and it was he, who wondered! We explained, only last night we had dinner with the Chaudhuris and were afraid of showing up again, so soon. He laughed.

The Swami had a small car, a gift from his father, he confessed with a rather boyish smile. In the back seat across the entire length lay a *tanpura*, complete with a cotton cover or shawl.

"You sing?"

"Well, just a little. A few hymns, some *bhajan*, a *kirtan* now and then. There really is nothing like Sanskrit. Every time I hear it it sends a thrill through me. *Samskara*, I suppose."

To hear this, in downtown San Francisco, was no less a thrill to the two of us. We soon reached a cafeteria and sat down to an ascetic lunch. But the conversation was rich and rewarding. Nothing ascetical about that.

"Excuse me, a personal question," I asked him at lunch, "what made you turn towards, er, the yogic life?"

"I would say that it was a yearning for God, which I always had, and for a practical approach, not sectarian approach. The thing that I love about Indian religion and

* For the real ones, that is.

philosophy is its vastness. It is a window—opening on a wide, an infinite view. I had always a longing for Truth and when I found that here there was a practical way to it, I felt naturally drawn towards it. But it was the *Autobiography of a Yogi* by my guru that awoke my latent conviction. I saw it in a bookstore, was immediately drawn to the face on the cover. I bought it at once and read it at one breath. I knew that this is what I had been wanting all my life.”

“Would you consider your case as in any way unusual? Or are there others like you?”

“Why, yes. There are thousands of people in this country who are interested in yoga and the spiritual life. In the ashram of Paramhansa Yogananda there are hundreds of renunciants dedicated to the spiritual life. There may be others whom we do not know.”

“You said that you had been to India to do *tapasya*. Did you get anything out of it? What exactly?”

No, I did not go to India for that express purpose. I went as a part of the organisation. I also did some *tapasya*. In India it is hard not to. Did I get anything out of it? Of course, I did, a tremendous experience. But very hard to say “what exactly”. With a smile he turned towards me, “What *exactly* do you get out of Rilke or Rabindranath?” I enjoyed the gentle irony.

“You said that you felt at home in India, that you feel at home with Indians. Would you care to explain a bit?”

“Well, again it is hard to say. I feel I must have been born in India in more than one life. Or how was it that I never felt quite at home in the Christian scriptures? I am not criticising. But as soon as I came across the *Gita*, for instance, I felt the whole thing to be familiar, acceptable. It was the same about food. I like India food better. I have been familiar with Bach and Beethoven ever since I have been a child. But Indian music seems closer to me. As a *sadhak* I naturally feel that India is the most spiritually minded country, though many Indians of today do not believe that. I feel at home among devotees and spiritually-minded people.”

"You have applied for an Indian visa, you say. Do you plan to stay on in India or do you think America is your natural sphere of activity?"

"You see, in this matter I have no will of my own. I want to go to India, that's true, but that's different. I would go wherever God sends me. I have no desire of my own. Or very little."

"Do you mind saying something about your Guru? How did you meet him?"

"About Guru? That's hard, very hard. I told you that I had read his *Autobiography*. After reading the book I took the next bus, a 3000-mile trip from New York to California. On reading his book I knew immediately that this is what I had been looking for. He too accepted me rightaway, which was not usual with him. But, after a slight pause, "It's hard to say anything about someone so great as he was. What can you say about the Sun or God, for that matter? It is easy to speak about something small. In my travels in India I did not meet anyone whom I could consider his peer. I mean no disrespect. You see he was great in so many ways and so balanced. He could meet all kinds of people on their own level and bring them to God-consciousness. Never have I felt so much love pour out of any one. He was truly a *Premavatar*, an incarnation of love. The good he did to this country was tremendous. He was, in my opinion, the greatest ambassador of India, if it is the duty of an ambassador to win goodwill and respect for one's country. He did that better than any one I know of."

"About your book on India, what do you wish to bring out? You know strange things have been said about India?"

"And still are," added my young companion, breaking in.

"I would like to write about the important things in Indian culture. Every country or culture has something to give. If there is one thing that I would like to bring out more than anything else, it is the need of a non-sectarian spirituality and India's contribution to it. India is the guru of mankind. There is no question of missionary activity or

conversion in this. It is a conversion to God, not to any particular creed."

"Don't you feel that to speak of the East and the West is somewhat false and foolish in our present context? That the world of Truth is one or none? And so it has been always for those that know?"

"Well, yes. I feel that is the truth of the matter. But we have to talk in terms of difference in order to be able to show the underlying unity. There is no important difference. There are many Indian businessmen who I think are more American than I am. I for my part feel an affinity with many Indians that I would not feel for some Americans. The racial issue is irrelevant. The way the difference between the East and the West has often been played up is unacceptable to me. It is the same human nature everywhere."

"What is wrong with the modern or the American way of life? Do you see any hope?"

"I would rather talk about what is right rather than what is wrong. We know what is wrong: the restlessness, the tension, self-centredness, and all that. No use going over that. But there are good points too. Their very restlessness has driven them to religion. Also they want results. That is a good thing in some ways. When you have your back to the wall you fight hardest. From that point of view I think this civilization, whatever its shortcomings, offers an unusual opportunity to all who want to choose. Huge numbers have been drawn away from the churches and the religious life, but large numbers have been drawn to it too. That is a fact. All this insecurity and suffering is forcing men to think about spiritual things once more and seriously. Science itself has helped in this, whether it wanted to do this or not. Distance has been conquered. No one is a foreigner any longer, but brothers living in another land. Also, this marvellous freedom of thought, I think that is a positive gain. Everywhere in the past there has been a slow, inevitable accretion along with much good. It is good that

from time to time all this accretion should be got rid of. The free thought of today is a clearing-house process.

"Today it is no longer possible to be tied up with narrow dogmas, social customs, and other superstitions. This, I think, is a wholesome attitude that the age has developed. Our century has more of this than we have seen at any time before."

"You don't think of science as necessarily opposed to religion and the spiritual life?"

"No. As you say, not necessarily. The recent discoveries of science have shown that which we call form is but a play of energy, this is a tremendous step towards the unity and evolution of religions. This has expanded our views. It has broken up conventional, hidebound religions no doubt but it has also broken up all bounded visions. We are free to move on. We have attained a truth that is far more noble than the old narrowness of 'My god, my church, member of my group.' We have done away with all such divine favoritism. Civilizations are coming much closer than at any time before. Science has helped in this without perhaps meaning to do it. You remember that incident in *Through the Looking-Glass*? Alice is about to eat her pudding, when someone introduces her to it. She couldn't eat the pudding after that. You can't eat someone after you have said: 'How do you do?' It is the same, or will be the same, with the world to-day. Wiser men have seen this vision of future, among them many great Indians too. This idea is already at work in our world. One who knows does what is right. The possibility of knowledge is itself an affirmation of faith, isn't it?"

"Yes. All ignorance is vincible ignorance," I sounded a theologic note.

"That's it," said the Swami getting up. "But I must leave now."

We came out of the revolving door. He got into his car, pushed his head through the window.

"*Abar dekha habe*, we shall meet again," he said.

"*Nischai*, of course," we shouted above the roar of the engine.

Soon the car spun round the corner. We waved and silently wished him luck along the path perilous.

As we walked back to the bus stop neither of us spoke for some time.

CRESCENT MOON RANCH

Sometimes things happen when you least expect them. It happened like this. During my last week in San Francisco my good friend, Dr. Chaudhuri, of the Cultural Integration Fellowship, inquired if I would like to spend a few days with friends in Arizona. It would include, he said, some speech-making (nothing loath), some sightseeing (Grand Canyon included) and still leave me plenty of time to return to Columbia from where I was flying home. They had a branch at Sedona and the branch had expressed a desire. . . .

"Thy will be done. Arizona, here I come," I told Dr. Chaudhuri on the phone. A week later when the Astrojet dropped me at Phoenix airport the air outside felt warm, almost hot. But how clean and sharp! The heavy topcoat which I carried like Sinbad the sailor was the only blot on the landscape and slowly breaking my back.

At the gate stood Mrs. Duncan, smiling.

"—?"

"Mrs. Duncan, I presume?"

No identification problem, you see. She was carrying a Tagore book in her right hand while I had flung a Kashmir shawl across my left. The ingenuity had paid off, on both sides.

At the end of a hundred-mile drive through deserts, mountains, the Yucca, the ubiquitous cacti and gleaming ghost towns we reached the little town of Sedona at nightfall. Dinner at the Turtle Restaurant, with mosaics and paintings by the Navajo Indians, was followed by a short hop home. It was dark and dusty when we drove up to the — Crescent Moon Ranch.

At the sight of it something stirred within me. Vague memories—of Tagore's book, the third eye of Shiva, the Rodeo and the wild West. But I was too tired—we had been talking non-stop, for the last two hours on all subjects under the sun and some even beyond, from the IBM to Immortality, in the latter of which both the Duncans, and I, solemnly believed—to figure out the mysteries of free association.

An entire cabin by the hillside had been left for my use. Cabin? Yes, sir, but no log cabin. The age of horse-and-buggy was over. Three small, elegant rooms, furnished with all utilities, gas cooking range, refrigerator, bath, heating system, everything. Nothing could express more simply, beautifully and eloquently the work of the Cultural Integration Fellowship on the physical plane.

And there were books. Any number. Mostly on Indian culture and allied spiritual subjects. Ramana Maharshi, Sivananda, Vivekananda, Tagore, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo, etc. I chose *The Secret Teaching of All Ages : An Encyclopaedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Cabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy*. The goddess of sleep must have smiled at my vanity. To be frank, I dozed off pretty early. When I woke up at midnight there was silence everywhere. And the book? The book was lying ignominiously on the floor, most of its secrets still intact. A gentle wind fanned my cheek while the stars sent their benediction from above. Nearby horses neighed and cow-bells tinkled. It was a new but entirely satisfactory experience and I must have fallen asleep again almost immediately.

When next morning I woke up, refreshed, the sunlight pouring through the window was a blazing flood. Holy, holy, holy, it sang in my veins. It was too good to be missed and I did not like to miss it. The chirping of the birds was a reveille that could not be reasonably refused. I quickly dressed and went out.

What a view! If the Fellowship had been looking for a venue for an Ashram here it was.

On all sides stood the inscrutable hills, reminiscent, as

Mrs Duncan had pointed out the previous evening, of the countryside round about Ajanta-Ellora, while the ochre earth could not help reminding me of Santiniketan. A creek, that had made sweet music for me all night, glided by. Not a house within hailing distance and no noise, none except that of the birds. I felt like an Adam of the morning and got back some of the innocence that life in sophisticated San Francisco had robbed me of.

But even Adam needed breakfast and I presented myself duly at the Duncan's retreat at eight o'clock. The house, on the ledge of a raised plot, overlooked the creek. The garden had a Japanese touch, with its stones and lights on the ground, while the interior was perhaps more Indian than most affluent Indian homes today.

After breakfast Mr. Duncan, a man of few words but always sensible, left for work. Mrs. Duncan kindly took me round the ranch, a working ranch, as she told me, with some cattle, a pear and an apple ranch. A modern Ashram, shall we say? As we stepped across the dusty, pebbly road the amazed cows and horses looked for a moment at the intruders in their pasture before returning to their accustomed activity. What struck me most about the place was the peace, the peace everywhere. It was such a contrast to the image of America and my own life in San Francisco during the last few months. To look at the young lambs across the country green, the creek flowing through the red hills, a water-fall, the blaze of daffodils, and the whiff of meadow-sweet, the sunlight that coiled content on the white branches of the silent sycamore tree,—it somehow seemed to reconcile you to reality.

Where is the refuge swept with cleansing air
To soothe the anguish of the muddled mind
So twisted on itself? O mind be like a tree!

How right the ancients had been in choosing inaccessible mountain heights and lonely streams, away from the madding crowd! Here sang peace, peace in the air, peace in the grass, peace in the trees, and peace in the heart of one man. I

must have become a little absent-minded. Mrs. Duncan's gentle voice brought me back to actuality. She was speaking about the Ashram idea and how it had begun, what difficulties and prejudices had to be fought against and how, slowly, the idea was gaining ground. It was fascinating, being with and listening to this friendly, sensitive spirit, who knew and loved India so well. It was a lesson in hope and humility, being with her, a *tapasvini* from the West. Frankly, there was neither East nor West, only the Centre

Later in the day, when I had a chance, I asked her a few questions which she quietly answered

"How long have you been interested in India and the spiritual life?" I asked her.

"Well," she spoke slowly in a soft voice, "I think I have been interested in the spiritual life always, even as a child. My first contact with India was, I believe, through the writings of Tagore and Dhangopal Mukherji, both of whom I later came to know and admire so much. I felt a ready response when I read them. Then, in 1930, when I was going through a trying time, seeking, you may say desperately seeking," she added with a smile, "one day my father told me about Sri Keshkar, who was then in the Roerich Museum, New York. I went to his classes and was thrilled. He taught the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Sutras* of Patanjali and the Bible. He was a very holy man and had no dogmatism, a person who emanated the light. At this time I began having some inner experiences, little ones, quickened, no doubt, by contact with him."

"How did you come across Tagore and Sri Aurobindo?"

"I met Tagore in Florence in 1931 or so. I had been already interested in Indian religion and philosophy and he had asked me to visit India. But my children were then quite young. However, I went, in 1934, alone. The first part of my stay I spent with the venerable and dear soul, Sri Keshkar, in the small town of Ratnagiri. It was such a small town really. You could even buy a post card! But I believe I absorbed more of India that way, living there, than in any other. And, oh, Diwali, I shall never forget that

With him I later went to Bombay and from there to Ajanta-Ellora. And then--there were no planes in those days--by train to Calcutta. There I met my old friend, Saumya Tagore. Later I went down to Santiniketan, for a short but memorable visit. How is it now? But I was ill part of the time and had to go to Kashmir for a change, stopping, briefly, at Banaras."

"And Sri Aurobindo?"

"It's strange, but it was Saumya, the radical revolutionary, who directed me to me. He of course knew of my spiritual interests. Did you know what a great teaser he could be? He used to call me the Mystery Mouse. I've forgotten what I called him. The Bengal Tiger, I suppose. But it was he who gave me *The Riddle of This World*. That was the beginning, you might say. On return I read Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*. And more later. It's an ocean, you know."

"How did the 'ocean' affect you?"

"You see I was seeking for spiritual light and answers. I had found answers, here and there, at different places. But I never found so many, at one place, as in Sri Aurobindo. He also seemed to me a bridge between the past and the present, between the East and the West too. Some of the Oriental writings did not mean much to me, maybe due to my Western conditioning. Asceticism, for instance, has never appealed to me. Sri Aurobindo's approach and attitude seemed to make sense to me. For instance, his idea that all life is yoga. Also, that the truth is within."

"You know Browning said the same thing."

"Really?"

"Here it is," I said, trying to remember the lines as best I could

Truth is, within ourselves, it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fullness, and around
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception- which is truth

A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
 Binds it, and makes all error ; and to know
 Rather consists in opening out a way
 Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
 Than in effecting entry for a light
 Supposed to be without.

"That's it," she said.

"But how did the Ashram idea come about?" I inquired.

"You know," she said, looking at the hills beyond, "the dream of an Ashram was not clear for a long time. It seemed to come to a focus after we acquired this property and after, I should add, meeting Dr. Chaudhuri. He himself was then in a difficult situation, didn't quite know whether to stay here or to go back to India. We offered him the use of this place. For his own work he, however, preferred to stay in San Francisco. But from time to time he would come down and talk to small groups. There, by the creek," she pointed with a wave of her hand, "one day, speaking of other things, he talked of this place as a perfect setting for an Ashram. That was the seed-idea, so to speak. But he believed in going slow. Then when we were in India again we had an interview with the Mother. She said, 'Now the work will begin.' That's all."

"What are your main activities now and what changes or developments do you foresee in the future?"

"Main activities? Well, I should say the gathering of the group twice a month, when we have readings and discussion. Then there is the book-lending section, that is the library. And facilities for people who are interested to come down and bide for a while, for rest, reading and meditation. Occasionally we invite people, even from India. Purani was here."

"What else?"

"You see our interest is in yoga, union or unity. My own interest for years and years has been to unite the East and the West, first, of course, in myself and then in whatever . . . you know, wherever possible. One can only try. Really

the work is not ours. If we can make ourselves into instruments, that will be enough. About changes and developments, I would say that the dream of the Asram is slowly unfolding, materialising will be too big a word. I have hesitated to call it the Moon Ranch Centre, but more and more it is coming to be called like that. Do you think it is all right?"

"That's just about right, I should say."

"We are building, or preparing, slowly. You see the facilities now are few and far between. But we are soon going to have another well, this will supply water to the new buildings that we hope to set up soon. But," she added after a pause, "my own feeling has always been that an Ashram gathers round some holy man or great soul. We don't have one, unless it be the great spirit of Sri Aurobindo. Purani said, he is here. Perhaps one day other souls will come too. At any rate, the current of exchange between this place and Pondicherry, which is the focal point, is there. By this we do not mean or imply any exclusive set or caste or creed. As I have said, our ideal is the ideal of unity and that means the presence of diversity and the presence of a great soul, one who unites all this diversity. Perhaps more than one soul. If it is destined, if it is the will of the Divine that it should be so, it will be done one day. What do you say?"

"I feel it will be done. It is already under way."

"You really feel so?" asked Mrs. Duncan rather anxiously.

"Indeed, I do. Mrs. Duncan, I am now going to ask you something rather dreadful. Supposing, at gunpoint, shall we say, someone were to ask you about your credo or faith, what would you say?"

"Gunpoint?" she raised her eyes in alarm.

"That was a metaphor, misplaced," I readily assuaged her.

"Well, I believe (here the voice fell very low, it was as if she was speaking to herself) in the Light within myself, within all of us, within Nature, within everything. And I also believe in the Being and Becoming and that we are that

Being in Process, unveiling the Truth inherent in all of us. But are *we* unveiling the Truth or is It unveiling Itself? I think It is." Stopping for a second she continued, "And of course I have tried to see the One in myself and in all. But," she added with an unfeigned smile that had a lot of sunshine in it, "I also forget it a good deal of time."

She was in excellent company, I assured her, at which the smile only broadened a bit.

"Another question, Mrs. Duncan. You know many people, including Indians, say that India is a spiritual country. Do you really feel so?"

"I do," she said without a moment's hesitation. "The great thing in India is the spiritual undercurrent. One feels it all the time, provided one is a seeker oneself. I felt it strongly while I was there. India is the pearl of great price. Through the rise and fall of nations she has been faithful to the spiritual idea, more than most countries and cultures. That is a fact."

"You once said that in America there are no holy men. Would you care to explain?"

"I should qualify that by saying that if they are there, I haven't met them so far. By holy men I of course mean illumined souls. I have met many fine souls here, but that is not the same thing. It is a great blessing, believe me, to be able to sit at the feet of someone who has realised the Truth, the Self. One hungers for it, one yearns for it."

"Mrs. Duncan, it is almost needless to ask you this, but do you believe in the ideal of human unity?"

"Oh, yes," was all that she said. Was there need for more?

"One last question. Your first Indian teacher called you 'Lila', which is our word for 'world-play'. Are you happy to be part of the play?"

"Yes, indeed." But the smile soon turned pensive. But then again the smile came back as soon as it had disappeared. "You know I liked the reaction that this word always brought in India every time it was mentioned. Everyone smiled." (No wonder. So did I.)

"Did you know Margaret Wilson?" it was now her turn to ask.

No, I did not. But I told her that I had heard of that gentle devoted daughter of President Wilson who had spent her last days in Pondicherry, at the Ashram there.

"We were old friends. May I show you a letter she wrote to me? I think you will like it," and she brought me a somewhat faded script. It read: "This is to send you loving Christmas greetings and a prayer for the birth of the Christ-child in us. Birth is never easy, is it?—therefore the straining at the bonds, the groaning efforts which we think we are making, when it is really nature in us straining to give birth to the Divine Child hidden in her Heart. Perhaps we should be glad for the pain because then we know that the birth has indeed begun. In fact I think that I should be anxious if there were no pain for fear that I was not near. There seems to be no escape! Here in this place where everything is made as easy as possible we groan and travail just the same. But, oh Lois, to be able to gaze upon two in whom the Self has been born is the great reassurance I have known." It was a letter that ennobled one even to read, its very pain was but the passion for perfection, for the new birth.

But how recount the experiences, the winged days? It seemed a luminous hand guided the turn of every event. The "children" were gathering, there was no doubt about that. The simple miracle was obvious every moment of the four days I spent at the Crescent Moon Ranch. It is really hard to say how the days passed, in the bliss of solitude no less than in that of the most meaningful of companionships. Even the Grand Canyon loomed less large than this growing awareness of the One World in many hearts. It seemed all so simple and inevitable—the many friendly contacts, in the valleys, on hilltops, amidst the fragrant pine forests, at downtown stores, with lonely artists lost in their dreams, young couples who read *Savitri* together, in schools bright with the laughter of children and stange music in the mesa, Hallelujah in the howling desert.

When finally Mr. and Mrs. Duncan waved me farewell with our agreed formula of "To be continued" (substitute for 'Goodbye') Crescent Moon Ranch was soon lost behind the silent hills. The Crescent Moon, I suddenly remembered, was the symbol of new beginnings, the new birth. Looking at the full moon up above I knew the symbol was also a fact. Our parting was an illusion. The hour of the Great Birth had come. Kipling was dead as the dodo. On the shores of supermanhood the children of the future played the game of games

THE SEATTLE WORLD FAIR

All the world's a fair. But for nearly a whole year Seattle's Fair was the World's Fair, the mostest and mustest. All roads led to Seattle. Since I was passing that way, I also joined the throng and saw the sights. The result is before you.

I went thru' the East gate. In front of me stood a long but neglected green totem pole from the Indian Northwest, sighing of days gone by. Few cared. Here the accent was all on the Present, rather on the Future, the twentyfirst century, and what American science was going to do about it. The rest—art as well as entertainment—was a kind of backdrop for the gospel of good times.

Saluting the sad symbol I walked on—to the other side of the road which proposed more pleasing fare. The modern 'Japanese Village' hinted at exotic allurements. The billboard told you openly (what heresy but how true!): "Stop—Escape the Western World." I stopped, but didn't go in. One look at the cigarette-chewing modish Japanese Miss was enough to keep me out of the village and its hidden treasures: the pearl divers, the dances—classical, mediaeval and modern—the Tea Ceremony and the tempura.

But there was ample recompense near at hand. The Polynesian Playhouse was willing to let us hear the "Sounds of Paradise" for a dollar and a half. I preferred unheard music and was not tempted. Not even by the famous Hula star, "Queenie Dowsett," or, a close rival, Lona Tika, the Tahitan Princess. But already I was beginning to feel a bit cosmopolitan. The pagan world was not without distinct educational possibilities.

All the while, at regular intervals, the obedient microphone relayed President Kennedy's opening speech: ". . . extend a special invitation to every visitor. . . . We all must learn more of science. . . . together with its blessings presents us with social question. . . . open discussions of free men aspiring toward a fuller life for all mankind." That set the tone for the show as it were. At least for a part of it.

I say part of it, for, as I was to find out, there was far more of the "blessings" than any "open discussion" of the problems of technology. It was all like a page from the early H. G. Wells and his hope of a modern utopia. It did not take me long to find out that the 21st century—should there be a 21st century—was going to be an Age of Science even more than this. It was also equally clear (if you don't know) that the more of science would mean less of man. After all, one must choose. So far as the Seattle World Fair was concerned, they had made their choice. Unfortunately, the wicked Russians had stolen the thunder. For it was the time of the year when Popovitch, the Soviet astronaut, was up in the air. The moral of the Russian feat was easy to read and it somewhat damped the spirit of the pilgrims at Seattle, and free men's aspiration "toward a fuller life for all mankind."

Science, science, science — one had heard the magic formula before

Unfortunately, gadget for gadget's sake and science without ethics does not appeal much to our "underdeveloped" minds. And only the day before I happened to visit the Boeing factory, a few miles off Seattle. It was quite an education, an ample prologue to the Fair. Right in the Tourist Centre, even before the conducted tour had started, we had a preview which told the tale and prepared us for what was following. Maps, charts, models, aerial voices, imitation voyages into space made everything plain. Under the garb of national defence Science had changed into Wings of Death. The missiles spelt money's ultimate reasons, *ultima ratio regum*. Before the bemused and uneasy crowd, which

included little children, the Message of Boeing, the Noble Truth, stood out. It said :

1. BOMARC IS ALWAYS ALERT

Bomarc is a push-button weapon—ready to fight in seconds—any time. (How reassuring ')

BOMARC IS FAST, DEFENDS LARGE AREAS

Almost three times faster than sound, Bomarc reaches the enemy (extraordinary euphemism) in a matter of minutes anywhere over the large area it protects

2 BOMARC IS DEADLY (in case you had any doubt)

*Target-seeker Bomarc missiles fight their own battles against one enemy or a hundred

BOMARC IS ECONOMICAL

Bomarc's quick reaction, high speed and long range mean fewer missiles for maximum area defence

Bomarc's automatic operation and maintenance mean smaller crews

Bomarc requires minimum land area for installation. (Hurrah)

3 BOMARC MORE DEFENCE PER DOLLAR

Tout est la, all was in that. But enough is enough. Such was my experience of Bomarc and "Boeing—A Company with Many Meanings." But one above all—Death

The Fair was, of course, more sophisticated and provided ample camouflage for the loud bleat of Bomarc. The World of Science, The House of Science, The Development of Science, The Spacerium, The Methods of Science, The Horizons of Science, "Doing" Science, National Aeronautics and Space Administration—these are some of the sections in

the beautifully designed U. S. Science Pavilion. It was certainly worth a visit and drew the largest crowd. Everywhere the accent was on Science, Space and the streamlined 21st century, "Tomorrow's Today." It was good to see alliteration's artful aid in the services of science.

The tale of U. S. satellites was duly told, and how since the launching of the American satellite on January 13, 1958, the USA had sent sixty-five satellites in a "systematic programme of space exploration and discovery." Automatic highways and the next century's strides in communication were all on the agenda. All the time a super-salesman told you the glad tidings on the air, sang, unwearied, the hallelujah to the New Goddess and the euphoria that awaited the faithful.

"We'll work short hours," said the Voice. "We'll have more time for arts (don't believe, dear reader), sports (yes), and hobbies (perhaps). Some of us will fly (with or without tails, pray ?) ; some drive our air cars (wish I had one, so I could go back home). But most of us will use rapid transit jet-propelled monorail systems."

All of which was good for morale

Next, we were invited into the interiors of an office. (Office, mind you, not home. You can guess what will happen to the home in the 21st century. If you are interested, you may hope to find it in the anthropological museum. "A social institution that survived up to the end of the 20th century," the guide will tell your grandchildren. As the test-tube babies in *Brave New World* said : "Mother" was smut. They neither had one nor spoke of one. Oh, impersonalized genesis !)

"Its computers," the Voice went on, "producing metallic cacophony (truthful for once) . . . Automatic door-openers, self-correcting office machines and T V telephones are as commonplace as today's typewriter."

"Executives of the next century will earn a minimum of twelve thousand dollars a year for a twenty-four hour work." (This was not exactly impressive. So many do, already).

In the dim light of the office room the Voice boomed :

"Our scientists have developed foods rich in protein. The deserts are blooming. (What about cities laid waste? humanity uprooted?) We're tapping new, inexhaustible (don't be too sure) sources of food. We farm the sea. . . ."

Nearby stood the Space Needle, flame-topped symbol of the Fair. Supported by three curved steel legs, 500 feet high, the needle soared 606 feet in the air. On top of it was an observation desk and a revolving restaurant to which you could ascend in high-speed elevators. But the pinkish outline on top looked so childish, when one thought of the Eiffel Tower. A huge queue stood in front. Somehow the photo looked to me better than the original. I gazed and gazed and moved on.

The vision of science had not, alas, forgotten the children. There were lot of absolutely horrid games, which you could not see in darkest Congo at its worst. The games were mostly speed tracks and journeyings into Dantesque horrors. Deep called unto deep and children yelled and yapped as they went round and round or disappeared into the entrails of Tartarean gulfs. It was a sad spectacle. Sadder far was the face of a girl standing behind a balloon bar. For ten cents you had three shots, that is if you punctured a balloon you were given a prize. This was a crowded stall. More children, including many who were chronologically older, seemed to be punctured by the beauty than were able to puncture the balloons. The organizers certainly showed imagination in their selection of personnel. The children were being spoiled all right. They didn't mind it, it was obvious.

A special pep talk was addressed to the children—the children of the future. "Now you are in a school of tomorrow, its walls made of jets of air, its tables standing on invisible legs, the floating canvas roof controlled to catch the sun. Memory-retention machines whir in the background. Television screens mirror the day's lessons" and more in that vein. Nothing, by the way, was said about the content of education. Perhaps there would be education pills and injections. Whatever it was, "it is good. . . . and almost yours,"

said the glib guide. That "almost" was charming, almost British in its understatement.

But before all this would come to pass, what about the *jinn*s of the new witchcraft? "Research is the Real Story" and we saw the real story in all its glory. Bomarc, for instance, was there once again, in full panoply. But more portentous than Bomarc, the electric power stations and the hummer researches done by Bell Telephone was the IBM pavilion.

Electronic Computers were the Thing. There could be no doubt about that. Here the Masters of Cybernetics took over and explained the mystery of the Mind and the new efficiency in communication. The charts showed the progress: Physical, Verbal, Symbolic, Abstract, Inferential, and Neural. Excerpts from Wiener and Korzybski were prominently and menacingly displayed. "To live effectively," Wiener told us from the blank walls, "is to live with adequate information." But it was Korzybski who explained it. "What is characteristic of the human class of life is the unique capacity of man for binding time, past, present and future, into a single growing reality. The natural rate of human progress is the rate of a swiftly increasing exponential function of time." If you don't like or understand this more-than-Bergsonian mystique, well, the 21st century is not for you and your like.

The next announcement was slightly simpler, because expected. "Man enters into a new partnership of the mind. Man talks with machines and the machines talk with men. Machines talk with machines." (Alas, we have been doing that all the time, Mr. Cybernetics, all these years in our schools and colleges, in Parliament, at the U.N. Machine, Be Not Too Proud.)

In the far corner stood another machine round which you could see the outlines of a few sad philosophers. It was the Machine that Answered All Questions. Tempting. But a story I heard made a trip unnecessary. Someone had asked the (inevitable) question: Does God exist? The Machine had supplied duly all the arguments, pros and cons, from

the Greeks down to our own existentialists. In the end, weighing the evidence, it had said, with becoming modesty : Perhaps ! It was a most fair Machine. If only it had a soul God would surely have blessed it.

Nor were arts and industries neglected. Of course, China and Russia remained unrepresented. In the International Pavilion it was nice to see the Indian section and Tagore's poem. "Where the head is held high. . . ." Much of it was of course government propaganda. One charming piece of inferiority complex caught attention : it seemed that we had produced some kind of a machine that had been ordered in Germany. News. Again, the Japanese seemed to excel and, as before, insisted on comparison with the host country. After each of the Japanese models, be it T. V., a model ship or a giant tanker, they always pointed out that the American opposite number was either smaller or inferior in performance. A strange revenge.

The Fine Arts exhibition, spread out in five pavilions, was surely a display, though it did not add up to much, I don't know why. Perhaps IBM and Arts don't agree. The five sections were : Art since 1950, Pollock, Horiuchi, etc. ; Masterpieces of Art, a puzzling collection, with some Titian, Michelangelo, Cezanne, Renoir, etc. ; Art of the Ancient East, mostly lent by the Seattle Museum and included at least one Avalokiteshvara from Nepal ; and Northwest Coast Indian Art and Northwest Painting and Sculpture of the Pacific Rim, in many ways the best of the lot and beautifully supported by a dazzling "Fountain of the Northwest" by James Fitzgerald, a combination of water and metal that was a delight by daylight and an enchantment at night.

At the other end was the Entertainment Industry. Topflight performers from all over the world were announced and it made one willingly pause : Old Vic, Comédie Francaise, Stravinsky, Udayshankar—and The Mexican Motorcar Police. That last bit, shrewd, real democratic stuff, don't you think ? Entertainment for the people, of the people, by the people ?

As though these were not enough, there was plenty of

divertissement for the groundings. The Show Street, which lived up to its reputation. As its organizers (whom God could hardly forgive, for the devils knew very well what they were up to) suggestively put it: "Easily the most flamboyant thoroughfare in the brilliant World of Entertainment is the gaudy and slightly naughty Show Street, with its principal places of business dedicated to the sound but unscientific proposition that there is nothing like a dame"

Eureka! Show Street's "anatomical offerings" varied in shape and size, but the offerings were made at the one and only altar—known the world over, from pole to pole, wherever the name of Sigmund Freud is known. A Hamlet might cry, "Oh, that this too too solid flesh might melt." In vain. Here, in Show Street, the too too solid flesh stood its ground, solidly, before the gazo of oh, how many thousand.

But this was the Prelude The Symphony was inside, to which you were cordially cajoled all the time This was "Backstage USA." In my earlier round I had gone by the place without noticing its charms. But this time, my doctor friend showed a keener eye for "anatomical offerings" Also there was a hollering idiot whom it was just impossible to ignore Here was IT, we stopped perforce The theme was simply and unabashedly "on the girls whose manifold charms are no less fascinating in the space age than in the stone age" For myself I would have preferred my *yakshinis* in stone What greeted our eyes were two or three rather ill-clad girls, past their prime, obviously tired and vored (that's the elder brother of bored) gazing into the middle distance What the language of their cultivated languor left unsaid the publicity man supplied in rich, juicy details The man was inspired and entirely uninhibited He suffered from neither scruple nor super-ego. Pointing to the ladies—to me they looked more like trapped animals—standing on the platform he invited the crowd to come closer and see things for themselves, to have a "good view." The suggestion met with ready approval I took the chance to take a few steps back As we were stepping out of the arena, the fellow let out a final piercing cry, which summed by his credo: "This is just

what the American public wants," he declared with obvious self-satisfaction. "Gents and ladies, in the World Fair you would like to see this sort of show. (How did the fellow know? ESP?) No extra charge. . . . At these sights (and those within) the old feel young, the young feel brisk . . . come closer, come within . . . Show begins in another fifteen minutes. And see the whole damned thing . . . Forty per cent of the people now inside are ladies." The finesse!

All this in broad daylight. This was World Fair. I wanted to escape to clean air, I had enough of "the most stimulating world's fair ever staged, dedicated to the future and designed to provide insight into tomorrow." This was insight into eternity, the eternity of the Abyss. My doctor friend tried to persuade me to see "the whole damned thing." When I refused he laughed and laughed at my "puritanism." I felt already damned.

If this was the 20th century I had no desire for the 21st. Fair is foul and foul is fair. When shall we two meet again? Never, never. With no regrets I walked out and caught a bus home.

THE CALL OF CLIO

Arnold Toynbee was speaking at Stanford, Palo Alto. Intellectually inclined friends provided the transport and at the end of a fifty-mile drive we found ourselves near the Memorial Hall, opposite the Hoover, the museum of war and peace. We had gone there half an hour ahead of time, to be sure of our seat. Alas, it was two hours too late. In the gloaming the side walks were jammed three deep with the biggest rally on the campus—all queued for the Professor. It was, I confess, a most moving sight. We took our position at the tail end and waited patiently for the throng to move. We did not have to wait long. Soon a university cop (in the U. S. some universities maintain their own police) came round and whispered loudly (to no one in particular) that the Hall was *already* full up, but those who wanted to listen could do so by going round the corner. The talk would be relayed on the mike. This was bad news. We knocked, vainly, at closed entrances, we raced across narrow staircases and inviting alleys, but the Stanford Memorial Hall was made of sterner stuff. In the end we accepted the inevitable, went round the corner, and stood, slightly shivering in the chill air, under the stars.

When, all of a sudden, the mike began to drone. Said the Voice from within: "... Perhaps the most distinguished historian on both sides of the Atlantic. . . . Needs no introduction . . . clarity and comprehensiveness. . . . which many must envy . . . In an age of specialists and monographs on trifles Professor T— was an exception . . . perhaps done more than any one else to make obsolete the narrow view . . . scholarly humility . . . had called his book 'A Study of

History', 'A' not 'The' . . . famous British understatement . . . Professor Toynbee . . ."

At which Professor Toynbee stood up. (Imagine he must have, because from where we were standing it was impossible to see him.) He thanked the organisers and without ado plunged into the topic : "An Historian Looks at the World Today."

"We are all looking at the world today, rather anxiously. Including historians," he added. "Now in what way can the historian's view help us to understand our times as they are, as they really are? What distinguishes the historian from others is his sense of the past or the sense of time. Time is of the nature of historic experience. The importance of the perspective of the past is obvious. The historian's perspective has this fourth dimension, the dimension of time past and time present

"About the world today, the present moment of history the question we ask ourselves is : Is this what is happening something new? Or has something like this happened before? The answer, if we could know it, might be of great help in solving our problems of today.

"Tonight I am going to take a few of these problems and try to find out if there has not been anything similar in our past history. If so, what help can these offer to us? The problems I shall deal with are mainly four : that we are living in an age of crisis ; that the great question is War ; that the globe has shrunk ; and that there is regimentation everywhere.

A certain subjective emphasis on the present age or the moment is perhaps unavoidable. After all, we and our times *are* the most important events in the world. Of course no one knows what the future holds. But, looking back, we do know, or can know if we like, what happened in the past under similar circumstances. So let us travel back, in imagination, to those critical periods of history and see what bearing these might have on our own times.

"There are, roughly, two ways in which an age may seem to be important. First, as an age of achievement, such as 5th-century Athens or Florence in the 15th century. Or

here, in America, the time of the Founding Fathers, or, in England the age of Elizabeth.

"There is, however, another way in which an age may acquire distinction. That is, as an age of crisis, such as the 5th century A. D. or the 10th century A. D. in western history. Now crisis may be genuine or not. In this matter we shall perhaps agree that the age in which St. Augustine lived was, as he himself felt, indeed critical. But we must also know that his awareness of the crisis was quite singular. Many of his contemporaries, eminent, intelligent people did not notice the writing on the wall, did not know what was happening. Only a thousand soldiers stood between Rome and the Rhine. But as regards the 10th century alarmists we cannot accept their version of crisis, that the world was coming to an end, that it was all up. Actually it was not an end, but a beginning, the beginning of a new civilization, the mediaeval civilization.

"So there is crisis and crisis. Ours, it is generally agreed, is an age of crisis. But, I think, we would rather go down in history as pioneers of a new age of achievement and a more lasting peace and social justice and not as men who brought history to a dead end. How to turn an age of crisis into an age of achievement, that is the real problem, and surely our best hope—in this crisis.

"Since the present crisis is connected with large-scale conflicts this leads us to consider war, and the fear of war, which is everywhere. The reason is obvious. The atomic weapons which we now possess, and are most likely to use in case hostilities break out, will result in an inconceivable disaster.

"But again, the historian asks. Is this not an old problem? Partly old and partly new. Are there historical precedents for the present situation? A few years ago I was in Iran, watching the ruins of a proud civilization. The former city-walls which looked imposing even today were the only thing to survive from the past. Inside there were barren fields and a few miserable huts. Even the crude and inadequate weapons of the 13th-century Mongol hordes had

sufficed to wipe out all traces of culture and those to whom it belonged. Compared to these primitive hordes what could we not do with all our advanced weapons! In the past ages war and conquest resulted in what was after all regional loss. It never prevented culture from sprouting or striking roots elsewhere. Now that possibility does not exist any more. It is all or none. If we go we shall take everything with us. Hence toleration or co-existence is so essential to our world today.

"In the past we see the progress in the art of making deadlier weapons. During the Crusades the crossbows were considered so infernal that the Pope had felt obliged to warn good Christians restricting their use only against the enemies and not against each other. The advice was, however, not always followed by the faithful. Gunpowder, tanks, bombers, and now the atomic weapons, these are all in a series. Now, the question before us is: Will the demoralising effects of war now prove to be sufficient to move the minds of men from doing away with it permanently? It is not the loss of physical life that is so disturbing. The moral and psychological losses would seem to be much greater.

"Also, it is not a fact that war as an institution has always been there. In the past there have been periods, short or long, of comparative peace, at least in the sense of an absence of war. *Pax Romana*, for instance. An even greater success was scored in the Old World in what is now China. In India we have the example of emperor Asoka, who voluntarily gave up the waging of war and turned Buddhist. This was, of course, an individual gesture, an exception and did not succeed in putting an end to war as an institution.

"In our own time, then, are we going to attempt and succeed in the global abolition of war as an institution? Much, perhaps everything depends on how this gets done. But why it should be done is of course easier to explain.

"Like other institutions war too is based on certain presuppositions. But if things change and the presuppositions are invalidated the institution will not work, will not be necessary as before. In earlier ages the soldier who fought

had some chance of defending his family or country, even if he himself might perish in the attempt. (It may be mentioned is passing that in many of the older civilizations only soldiers who had male children were allowed to take part in the fight.) In the battle of Thermopylae the Spartans did not expect to win but merely to hold back the attacking Persian hordes, but they did. But today? Such a stand has no chance today. The Persian staff officer has only to switch a button and, in a flash, everyone, civilian and soldier alike, will vanish. There is, therefore, no point in sending a soldier, or even a battalion, to a slaughter which is bound to be total or extensive. Simonides lines on the martyrs who fell at Thermopylae:

Traveller, go and tell the Spartans that we did
what we had been told and we lie here,

—the phrase can have little meaning today. Today there will be neither poet nor traveller, nor monument. The single flash will end everything, at once. In other words, the second presupposition of war, of the victor and the vanquished, has now lost ground. Today no one wins and everybody loses.

"All this surely makes nonsense of the institution of war as a deciding factor in history, or diplomacy. War has lost its rationale and it ought to be possible to do away with it. (Listening, I thought of Melville who had said: "War is now placed/Where war belongs—among the ruins of the past.") What we are faced with instead is an entirely new situation in history: the only alternative to peace is total annihilation. The abolition of war must be thought of as within the range of possibility. It may sound utopian and academic today, in this centenary year of the abolition of slavery, as *that* must have sounded utopian and academic in those days. It is up to us in our century to abolish war just as, a hundred years back, we had abolished slavery. We must hold on to the possibility because, as I have said just now, the only alternative is total and unspeakable destruction.

"I now come to another problem that has caused much misgiving to thinkers and planners. By shrinkage I do not

mean a physical loss. In fact, space flight would seem to add a new dimension to our earth-bound existence. I mean by it something different. I mean : (i) distance has been annihilated (ii) we are rapidly using up the resources of the world ; (iii) our population is growing at an alarming rate. Yet the prospects are not, and need not be, only frightful. There is a hopeful side to it too. We are coming claser to each other, much more than ever before, and the mixing of races may be a way out. (Earlier, in another group meeting, Toynbee had said, laughing, "On this matter of inter-marriage, I have been accused of having a procreative attitude.") Nor is the control of population beyond our means. It is true that even the tyrants of antiquity did not think of, nor perhaps needed to interfere in these intimate spheres of activity. But today we are obliged to and ought to be able to do it. As regards using up of resources technology may yet find more sources of supply and energy. The picture is not so gloomy as it might appear.

"It is true that all these measures will involve some kind of regimentation. Regimentation is increasing at a rapid rate in every sector of life today, especially urban life. Take the complicated traffic rules and the accidents. By contrast the donkey cart (here the entire audience smiled, and when a crowd of forty thousand smiles, it is a gale, if not a tornado), well, it was slower but it killed fewer people. Today the pressure of regimentation is much greater than at any other time in the past. Many liberties have to be sacrificed in order to live in the modern world. Even the Roman peace demanded some sacrifice and some price. So would permanent peace today. But regimentation is of course a means and not an end. The end is a new sense of justice and freedom.

"Thus, if we like, the age of crisis *may* turn into an age of achievement. And so I shall leave the question open : In the future post-atomic world will religion once again become the true theme of development and freedom ? It is, I think, better to hope that it may be so rather than despair and statistically calculate the possible deaths from a global

holocaust."

It was on that note of mild hope, a sort of Tagorean it-is-a-sin-to-lose-one's-faith-in-man that the historian stopped. And though this did not make us feel the coming glory of the Lord it was a ray in the encircling gloom and very different from what the prophets of despair have been yelling most of the time.

The meeting was over, the doors thrown open. From all corners rushed the lionisers, the autograph-hunters and *darshanawallahs*. Among whom needless to say. . . .

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

Surely one of the pleasures of foreign travel is to come upon an old friend in a new set-up. The year's work over, my coast-to-coast trip found me stranded on the Californian beach. The sea nymphs did not sing to me though and I turned to the daughters of Memory.

I remembered my schoolboy friend, M—, who had settled in San Francisco. I had heard reports of his fabulous medical practice, his orchards, his house and his hospitality ; how he had brought his old father over for a short visit and his younger brother for a long and expensive education : and how his home had become a kind of Holiday Inn for all Indians in transit from K. P. S. Menon to—myself.

I wrote him a letter, wondering if he would remember. I was writing after nearly two decades and that is a long time. His reply was just like him, quick and generous. He remembered (in great embarrassing detail) and wanted me to come straight to his place and spend some time with him and his family. "My wife insists—" he added in a postscript. That decided it.

A slight identification problem arose at the Greyhound bus depot. In course of the years M—had evolved so substantially that I had some difficulty in spotting him in the crowd. Where was the youthful Apollo of Prince of Wales Medical College ? In the end having failed to spot him I turned to the only likely Indian in the area. When the mountainous back turned round and switched a sudden, smile of recognition. An eager clasp followed. This was M— all over, only bigger and better.

"Where's your baggage ? Is this all ? Travel light ?"

After a pause, "Oh, how we shall talk! About everything, from Sputnik to strip tease," he added with boyish glee.

"Leave out the latter, please," I pleaded. "I am still innocent."

"We shall see."

And so the days passed, with dialogues carried from day to day.

Here is one.

"How did you happen to come to the States?" I asked him one day.

"How or why?" answered M—. "After I had completed my education in England and Europe, my professor asked me to come over here and learn some of the things they were doing. He kind of got me the job. That's how and why I came to the States. I hadn't planned to.

"Now for the why. One of the biggest reasons was that one fine morning, after the results were out, I found myself covered with most of the initials after my name, from A to Z, the degrees and diplomas. In fact, I was what one calls a specialist. And yet I did not know how to do the simplest of surgeries, leave aside complicated ones. I felt I would be a doubledealer if I went back to India with that gap in my equipment. In my time most Indian students were excellent students. They still are, I am told. Book-worms, but with no practical experience. Also those days we had to go to the hospitals, and stand in the fourth or fifth rows, behind all the white boys. Long live British Raj! The lads from Canada and Australia were always ahead of us.

"I am sorry to say this, but I think this is the truth. They could not flunk us in the written examinations. If they did, we wouldn't keep coming. And if the Indian boys didn't keep coming, what would happen to the many families that were being maintained by us? You see they really needed us.

"The examining bodies knew that they couldn't flunk us, because bookwise we have been always smart. But they could keep us back from practical training, and they did.

"Now of course Indian doctors are getting jobs in Eng-

land, Why? Largely because so many British doctors have left for the colonies. India is the biggest supplier of doctors to Britain, then comes Ceylon, followed by Pakistan." He stopped for a moment.

"What made you decide to stay on in the States?" I shot my next.

"Quite a long story, that. After coming here I had two years of surgical training under some of the best practitioners. Also here I was not discriminated. For instance, though young I was the chief resident surgeon in a big hospital, with complete freedom to work as I pleased. In two years I nearly all, that there was to learn about ENT. Plus, to satisfy the Indian hunger for diplomas I collected a few. Thus equipped, I made a little money. With that money I purchased an amount of medical equipment, and went back home, full of hope and idealism, eager to 'serve' India. Bursting with enthusiasm to give her my blood, sweat and tears.

"For eight months I knocked from door to door, in vain. I spoke at the All India Medical Conference, ENT Conference, etc. My papers were applauded by colleagues. I was the pride of India, someone said. We need boys like you, the chorus fell like music upon enchanted ears. I was beginning to feel happy and about to settle down. I showed my instruments to the medical colleges and also demonstrated some of the new techniques that I had learnt.

"The younger students were enthusiastic, but not the teachers. For when I looked for a job, they all backed out, one by one. On some pretext or the other. Eight months is a long time, especially with a wife and a child thousands of miles away and at home one's parents and younger brothers and sisters towards whom I felt a responsibility, and still do. My dream was broken.

"The last straw came from a college in Central India. They turned down my application in favour of a 'son of the soil,' as though I wasn't one! My qualifications were completely disregarded. I am saying this not out of vanity. In Bengal they said that they naturally wanted to provide for their own boys, and since I was domiciled in Bihar. . . . In

Bihar they said. . . . It was enough to break a man's spirit. I gave up.

"What was I to do? I had already borrowed a little money from my wife. I borrowed a little more, for the passage back to the U. S. Within three weeks of landing in the faraway Dakota plains, where I did not know a blessed soul, I was given complete charge of a big department in a huge clinic. At a fabulous salary and no questions asked about my caste, colour, creed or the province I came from. Well, I stayed on. As you can see, it was not altogether a wrong choice."

"No," I assured him. "But don't you ever feel homesick? And would you not like to return to India at some future date?"

"Of course. Homesick?" I shall be homesick till the day I die. India is still my country, my destiny, my everything. I would be glad to die for her. I think Indian. When I am happy I sing Indian and Tagore songs. When I see an Indian on the streets—it matters little from where he comes, Kashmir or Travancore, Bombay or Bengal—I grab his hands, bring him home and try to help him if I can. In spite of being an American citizen, on questions like Goa and Kashmir I become hyper-sensitive, I go into tantrums.

"And yet because of my family commitments, I don't think I can or should return to India in the immediate future. I have younger brothers whose education is not complete, a sister to marry and of course I feel responsible towards my parents. Then there's my wife and two children. I don't think I can help them half as much if I were to return to India just now. To begin with, I shall be among the unemployed. God knows how long. So, right at the moment, I am not going back.

"Maybe when I have a completely independent financial source, maybe ten, twelve, years from now I might go back. Do you know I offered my free services to two of the Indian universities, for the matter of that, any other university or organization that cares to use me. I wouldn't charge a penny. I haven't heard anything so far. Don't hope to

"As regards going home, if and when I can I do. I was there only this summer. But what with my ways of living and thinking, and what with this fast travel, I don't think I am really outside India. I don't feel so."

"Would you like the exchange of teachers and students between the two countries to continue? Have you any suggestions to make? Are you happy with the work done by Indian students and teachers abroad?" I asked.

"I agree wholeheartedly with the idea of exchange. First, because these two countries or cultures, India and the U. S., completely misunderstand each other. But there should be a severe selection. Men with sufficient intellectual training, liberal and mature minds, not those who think of America as a land full of criminals, lynchings and divorce and all that, should be chosen. But even they should not come here with the idea of converting Americans to their way of life, nor vice versa. No propaganda, please, not from either side."

"As regards the work done by Indian students and teachers, I am proud of it. Every day I see or hear of these Indian doctors, engineers, scientists and professors, how they are accepted by the different organizations, how much they are wanted. More wise as well as being socially acceptable many of the Indians have made a fine impression. Given the chance we Indians can come up anywhere and in anything. I have lost all my old inferiority complex. Indians are doing well, I am sure they will do even better."

"What things in American life have struck you favourably? and unfavourably, if any?" was my next question.

"Favourably." Quite a few things. Their so-called democratic form of life where they have done away with the barrier between teacher and taught, employer and employee, men and women. I feel in some ways they have really done away with the class system. Also, their attention to detail in every sphere of life, the desire for efficiency, to save time, the sense of the dignity of labour—Nobel Laureates doing their own gardening, carrying their books to the class, helping the janitor—doctors carrying patients from ward to ward,

the extreme cleanliness of their homes, and way of living.

"Walk into any American suburb. See how well they live—the gardens, the equipment. I could easily say more. For instance, in the medical profession every death in the hospital is gone into with such details. In the good old country some poor fellow comes to the hospital with stomach ache, *pet me darad*. Off with *pet*! And no one to say anything. Such a thing would be impossible here. But enough.

"Unfavourable? Well, some things I am quite unable to accept. Even if I were to stay here for a hundred years I will not accept the sad and tremendous misuse of freedom that American parents permit their children in the elementary and high school stages and, in my opinion, spoil them for ever. I do not like the way children talk to elders. I dislike their shabby and indecent dresses, especially the teenagers. As a father of two children I do not like the stress given in the American schools on irrelevant subjects—for instance, in many summer schools, meant for not too bright pupils, they have subjects like archery, puppetry and silly little things like that. Now I don't call that education."

"I see," said I. "In your criticism of American mores you will probably find most Indians are with you. But, tell me, do you mind a political question?"

"No, unless I get arrested," he said laughing.

"No fear. Here's the question: What do you think of the U. S.—U. S. S. R. tangle?"

"Well, I shall be brief. There is a growing belief that in the years to come the U. S. and the USSR will become the strongest of allies. Every day we are finding that we have more things in common than otherwise. In any case, that is the only line on which to build, unless we prefer to destroy each other, which is too horrible to contemplate."

"A last word. In the light of your experience what changes would you suggest in Indian society?"

"Well, don't treat me like a Manu. But I will say a few words.

"I had been to India recently in connection with my

sister's marriage. As regards the rituals, or most of these. I should like to see these thrown into the Bay of Bengal. Also the dowry system, it's plain hogwash. Our blatant flouting of Women's Rights, I mean women's inheritance, is just awful. We educate our girls, and then, just as before, we have to sell them in the open market. I can't tell you how bad I felt.

"Indian women are still far from getting what is becoming of them. But, mind you, I am not in favour of the emancipated, chain-smoking, hard-drinking Indian ladies. You may have seen some of them here. I am told they flourish in the big cities of India. A complete miscarriage.

"Talking of women, here I do miss the softness of old Indian women. I am not sentimentalizing. I have travelled a bit and kept my eyes open. The age-old refinement of oriental women is without parallel. My heart cries out for that. The sheer gentleness and pathos of the old world. I don't see why modern culture and this wonderful tradition cannot go together.

"Here, by contrast, everything is matter of fact. The matter-of-factness of American womanhood is staggering."

"What about the glamour industry?" I asked.

"It's part of the same vicious system. From 18 to 80 there is an attempt to keep young, look young. They don't know the art of growing old gracefully. Hence cosmetics, hence glamour. It's a trade to cheat those who are willing to be cheated.

"This they can learn from India, over and over again. Indian girls have their make-up, always had. But after a time they grow beautiful by their sense of service to the family, their devotion. America also had it once, in the early days. But since then it has been in steady retreat, till now few think that it is possible to have such women or such ideal relationships. Pity."

Pity.

THE DOCTOR AGAIN

The lure of scholarship took me to the west coast again, to the university of California at Berkeley. Apart from the professional duty and chasing the Incommunicable and the Impossible, it gave me another chance to meet my old friend, the doctor, M—. The weekends in his ranch house in the Napa valley stand out vivid and may have been more useful, certainly more enjoyable, than burrowing into mile-long bibliographies at the Berkeley library. One was business, the other was life for the living. The lush Napa valley, with its Shangri-La look, famed for its vineyards (a tear for the teetotaler), the afternoons in the Public Library, the L. P. records of Indian music at all hours of the day, and *garam cha* at any-odd-hour, the odder the better, after-dinner T. V. shows, with plenty of commentary by the audience, an occasional peep at the Beatnik holes in the North Beach, a concert, a Greek drama, a Japanese film, an Arnold Toynbee at Stanford, the peach blossoms by the wayside, and daffodils, daffodils everywhere, the long, relaxed rides to Nowhere-in-particular—no tourist agency could have ever worked out such perfect weekends for a poor wandering scholar.

For me, I repeat, the main attraction was M—. The "other" is always a mirror. To hear him was almost like hearing myself, these questions that with myself I so often discuss. All that I had to do was to "seed", that is stimulate him. The rest—you will see.

Twenty years out of India, a flourishing physician, M— was at the top of the tree. No doubt about that. But that was not what interested me, what drew me to him. It was an inner sensitiveness, which he had never lost, that

attracted me. It was something to watch him and his passionate paradoxes, the eternal East-West tussle that goes on in the heart of many an expatriate. Apparently Americanised, at heart he remained *pucca* Hindusthani. Is it that you never know the value of a thing unless you have lost it?

Somehow, as it invariably did, the talk turned to India, not Indian politics, but India, or Indian culture, if you will. It all started with a book by one Peter Schmidt. It was one of those exasperating things that a tourist with a camera and the experience of a shikar with the Maharaja of Mysore can be expected to write. It was, at places, even vulgar. By degrees, we moved up to *The Lotus and the Robot*.

The doctor was wild. "Somebody should reply to this scurrilous book, this drain inspector's report. You don't know how handy the people here find it. The other day one of my colleagues was quoting it with relish. I got mad at him."

"What did you say, beside being mad?"

"I told him that such things, as Koestler mentions, might exist, though the fact that he should have taken so much care to find only such facts probably told us a lot about the author himself. Such things exist everywhere. If I wanted to do it, with the help of a week's newspapers, the T. V. shows, the advertisements, and the paperbacks I could easily prepare a resounding *J'Accuse* so lurid as would make the Pilgrim Fathers turn in their graves. And then I would call it: THIS IS U. S. A. Only it just wouldn't be true, and, come to think of it, I could never do it. But somebody should, somebody should, for God's sake."

"I myself once asked a friend who might have done it. Do you know what he said?"

"What?"

"That it was beneath contempt, that K—was either possessed or paid. Perhaps both. For his part he didn't care what others said or thought. He didn't care to touch filth. He left that for the K-s."

"There you are," said the doctor with some heat.

"Nobody wants to do it. All the while we get abused and our silence is taken as a proof that the charges are true. We sit like impassive *sadhus* and think a controversy would be *infra dig*. But I tell you that's the only language these goddam—excuse me—fellows will ever understand. After all, men like Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo did not hesitate to enter battle. Then why don't we, especially those who have the ability—the authors, the intellectuals. I am not asking anyone to vilify or vituperate. Only to set the account right."

"What about our cream, the Ved Mehta, Dom Moreas, Shanta Rama Rau, Nirad Chaudhuris?" It was as if I had dropped a bomb. The doctor came out with a blast. "Rot their souls, I say. Rootless. The talent I do not at all deny. And now they are trading on it. Writing smart English isn't enough. The main asset of most of them is their dislike and guilt of all things Indian, to which has been added a colossal and cultivated ignorance of the true motives of Indian, for the matter of that any culture. These are the refuse of the British Raj. They are being hoisted and toasted, because our enemies find them useful instrument."

"I am sick, brother, I am sick. If these are our Great Moderns, I am glad I am out of India. Did you see the recent T. V. show on the International Ethical Institute or what was that? Who, do you think, represented Asia and India? Why, our dear—? Now, honestly, what does she know of India or of ethics? She hadn't even looked up Kane or Maitra, from whose works she could have taken some material. Her main contribution to the symposium was her oft-repeated bio-data, the pseudo-English accent, shaking the shoulder blades every other minute, and *completely* phony references to the Mahatma."

"What do you suggest?" I asked.

"What can I suggest? I am not an author or a thinker. And I have been out of the country for years. I am not sufficiently equipped to do anything about it. But, as a doctor, I do see a bit of life which most people never do. I can tell you a few things I've seen and known here, including

Indians in transit. It is a fact I've played host to nearly everyone who has come to the west coast—from the Consul General, Cabinet Minister, mighty military generals, top brass, old I. C. S., artists, visiting Professors, down to out-at-the-heels students in distress. You know," here the doctor's face suddenly lost its hard lines and the eyes lost their fierce glare of a moment before, "considering all things, we haven't done too badly. Last time we were on the Berkeley campus, you spoke of their equipment, their vitality, the range of their curriculum and compared it with conditions back home. I tell you it is not all to our disadvantage. If we had one-tenths of this opportunity we could do almost as well, if not better. What chances do we have, I mean what chances *did* we have under the old dispensation? And yet we didn't do too badly. Remember our Professors? R—, G—, or take your own guru, Professor Chatterji. Don't you think they could make people here sit up, if they ever came this way? And, yet, what are they doing back home? Just rotting. We are *very* good at that. Oh, I am grateful to my old teachers, including old Byombabu, who, as you know, did not believe in sparing the rod. He taught me the *Essentials of English Grammar*. I am glad he did."

"Talking of English grammar," I naturally asked him, "what do you think of the future of English in India?"

"Think? Well. I think it will be extremely foolish to give up our natural advantage in this respect. There is nothing slavish about learning a language. Not now. Have there been greater lovers of Indian wisdom than Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo or Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan? Many of them have written in English. I think all of them favour the mother tongue, but not in this tearing, indecent hurry. You see there's a lot of goofy talk going on about this subject. Those on top—our new élite—the policy-makers, know very well the advantage of an English education. They are sending their own children to the missionary schools, even abroad, while telling the rest of the world to go ahead with the regional languages and the virtues of the native woodnote wild. So that their superiority and

that of their descendants may be secure."

"All the same in the long run English as a medium of instruction will have to go," I said, "This does not mean giving up of English. In fact, we ought to teach it better. It's not difficult, with all the modern methods and appliances."

"Precisely, in the long run. But what is the use of starting it right now, with this indecent haste? Do you think that some hotchpotch translation of a few English text-books will solve the problem? Like the Osmania University's celebrated translation of an English sentence? "Luther burned the Papal Bull" was rendered as "*Luther ne Abbajanke baeloko jala diya.*" If we turn our back on the English language we shall soon find ourselves in the position of the smaller countries of the Middle East. Did I tell you that in the Entrance examination for the Bellevue Hospital, one of New York's best, the Indian students have always done exceedingly well? Why? Partly because of their excellent English. Why give up this advantage for nothing? Push on with the regional languages, if you like. If and when there is sufficient literature, the problem will solve itself. But not like this."

I asked him another "You know there is a general feeling that the English-educated tend to be denationalised. What do you say to that?"

"Nonsense. The Renaissance in India has been largely the work of the English-educated. And, pray, do *you* consider yourself as denationalised?"

"No, but then I am not very well educated."

"Now, don't try to be funny," said the doctor with some annoyance. "You see, there really is no connection between the two. Where this has happened, it has not been because of learning a new language but because of not learning one's own, also because of complete ignorance of one's own culture, a lack of self-respect. The answer for this must be sought elsewhere, in our schools and colleges, and, of course, the home. These have not been true agencies of our culture, at least not so well as they might have been. We must make our schools and colleges, the universities true centres of cul-

ture, not Indian culture alone. Belur, Santiniketan or Pondicherry are exceptions, proving the rule."

"I tell you," he added, "our boys are good material. Unfortunately, they get so little chance. Then most of them are regularly swallowed up by the administrative services, it is a regular hecatomb. Some come abroad, more than before, but their main idea is to return, if at all, to a good, cushy job, and not do a good day's work for the rest of their lives. I don't say everybody thinks that way, but most do. Tell me, how many of the old Oxbridge ever did anything worthwhile after going back to India? You remember the great A—C—? Even his 'sick degree' did not prevent him, first, from a Professorship, then Director of Instruction. Lord! You know what he used to teach us?"

Yes, I had vaguely heard of it. "English accent," I said in what must have been un-English accent.

"Yes, and more. For the chosen few how to mix cocktails. I hear he is now one of the pillars of the Bharat Sevak Samaj."

"Long live Bharat Sevak Samaj." I added with due solemnity, to celebrate A—C—'s conversion. (But what was he doing in dry Calcutta?)

"Of such was the Kingdom," added the doctor plaintively.

"Alas, it still is. So what are you going to do about it?"

"So, dear sir, when you get back to the old country, do something about it. There must be a few who will show the way. Walk alone, as your Tagore said. But in an intelligent way. Not by putting up a Gandhi cap and then doing nothing."

"Oh, don't speak ill of the headgear. It protects one from all evils, including unoriginal sins."

"There you go. Why won't you be serious for a moment?" said the doctor with a smile.

"I find you are serious enough for two. So I am trying to maintain the balance."

"Is this how?"

"All right, all right. I will ask you some real stiff ones now. First, what do you think of the East-West tangle?"

"Well, since Kipling wrote those lines they have become quite a shilbboleth. Nine out of ten do not know the context, if I may put it like that. It is a cubistic concept. Really, there is neither East nor West, but, as you said once, there is only the Centre. This so-called difference, overemphasised, overdiscussed, has become quite a chiché. But the wise have never accepted this as final truth. Take Toynbee. Of course his faith in intermarriage sounds a simplistic solution. The difference, and the implied superiority, are part of an imperial policy or myth. On the other side there has been religious bigotry. And now we can hardly get rid of the notion, which is obviously wrong and even dangerous. Luckily, we have refined minds and intellectuals, also the common folk who see through it all. I would say the feeling of difference is a passing phase. It will soon be buried among the prejudices of the past."

"What things in the modern or the western world do you value most?"

"Quite a few. Superficially speaking its science and utilitarian ethics. But really what I like most about the modern times is the spirit of democracy. Older religions did speak of God in man, *naranarayan*, but that did not prevent them from upholding the most hideous of inequalities. Here at least an attempt towards equalization has been made. Through the dignity of labour and opening of opportunities, even through their material progress. The relation between employer and employee, between teacher and student, between man and woman is no longer hedged by so many tabus. It is rational and efficient. To live well, we need a healthy body. I do not know if they have healthy minds as well, but they surely have made a start towards having a healthy body. That's something.

"But, as I said, we must not make too much of these differences, real or supposed. It is somewhat like Plato's description of the difference between the sexes. Originally they were one and so they are always trying to come together. Similarly, I believe the day is coming when these two halves of the world will join together. Then, we shall

see the value of their difference, for the difference will no longer divide. We have in this a chance to build a finer culture than either could have done separately. Of course this fusion of cultures cannot be done by any two-plus-two formula. There are dark oceans of pride and prejudice, psychological primitivisms to be gone through before anything can be done. But I think this will be done and that, perhaps, is the real reason behind this difference. This will be the true epic of Man, not those gory tales that pass for such. I think I can now see a little better into the vision of men like Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, who foresee a new spirit of unity and a further evolution of man. As yet this thought of theirs is like beep-beep, the still sad music of supermanhood. One day it will grow into a symphony, and a new Beethoven will write a new *Eroica*. Without ideals, without a spirit of dedication what is man? Nothing, less than nothing."

• "Well said, Doc. You know how heartily I agree. Another question. You have been here long enough. What do you think of American life and society?"

"That's a whopee, I say. There are many good things in this society, its openness, its freedom, its friendliness. But I don't want to speak of these things, but of things that have gone wrong with this society. It will be the same with us unless we are careful. There are dangerous signs everywhere. I will tell you some plain facts, as I see these. You see, I have, as they say, made good. I can now afford to take the larger view, perhaps pretend to be wise. And I tell you there is something rotten about Success. No wonder Ruskin—or was it William James?—called it the bitch goddess. Now I know why our people, and all old people, talked all the time about humility, about non-attachment and about disinterested action. Something happens to the successful man, to all successful cultures. They fail. Somewhere along the line, civilization begins to stale and then rot. That is how Rome fell. That is how we will fall too. Only since our resources are much greater than Rome's, the fall will be greater too. May be total destruction. It can't be too long in coming. One day some fool will press the button. I sometimes

wonder if *this* civilization is worth saving. I am not thinking of the U. S. A., or the U. S. S. R., but of this grasping, unethical industrial society without any kind of sanctions."

"I once thought differently," the voice went on. "You see the modern West dazzles us, with its wealth, with its science, with its power, its magical omnipotence, as e. e. cummings said. But this is not the light that illumines but the light that burns. It is a dark light, if you know what I mean. I now distrust it as I distrust science and the scientist, though I am myself one by training. Buddha, Jesus, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, were they *successful*, as we understand success? I think not. Nor were they civilized if *we* are civilized. Yet, today I have no doubts, it is safe and sane to follow them rather than the politicians of the world, rather than the will-o'-the-wisp of Success and Efficiency. I even wonder if our poverty and spirit of renunciation has not kept us going. I am not exalting poverty. By no means. Yet I cannot help feeling that this has been the backbone of our culture, of all true culture, why we have not been snuffed out. Time takes away everything and death is the end of all—it is only the glory of the Spirit that remains, if there is a Spirit."

"Toynbee had once said," I reminded him, "that the difficulties of a civilization are an opportunity for the religious life. Our extremity is God's opportunity."

"I agree. Some of the older values of life I can appreciate only now, *after* living here so long. The emotional culture of the East is a wonderful thing. The sense of respect, the refinement of personal relationship, where else will one get *that*? It would be wonderful if they had a little of it here. Here, in an atomised society, everybody seems self-centred. Modesty, for instance, is almost unknown. Equality is all very good, but there is also something more. Also, in this whirl of sensation and competition men have forgotten how to rest, how to relax, even, I suspect, how to be happy. Most of the time they are trying to forget themselves. Hence all this drinking and dope addiction. They don't know how to be happy with all,

except in a crowd. You know I wish all my friends and people were here.

"A tree is to be judged by the fruits, they say. Look at the kids! I don't blame them. I pity them, the unhappy and the unloved. But they can also be tyrannical. I think someone has written a book on the subject: *The Tyranny of the Teenager*. But, honestly, where are the adults in this society? After the children the aged. It is the saddest part of the story. The inhumanity of it. I now know why our people talked of *Vanaprastha*, the voluntary retirement into the forest and leading a spiritual life. For my part, I would like to return to India, did you say Return of the Prodigal?—No, no, it will be the Return of the Native. I shall work in some obscure corner or an institution. I have a feeling that will be the first time that I shall be truly happy, because I shall be doing something other than feathering my own nest and keeping up with the Joneses. I look forward to it." The doctor, tired, had stopped for a moment. There was a sad, faraway look in that tense, intelligent face.

"Look at the moon," I tried to divert him.

"Ah, the moon. The moon hath small pox on her face. You were right, you know, when you said that soon they'll open a Vodka factory in the East and a Coca Cola (king size) plant in the west, with a huge dividing wall which will house the new United Nations secretariat." He burst out laughing, the same old abandoned boyish laughter which mocked the passing years and took me back to our college days in the mid-thirties. The lines on the face had vanished. And, before he knew it, he had started to hum softly: *Chandse preet lagye*, oh, I have lost my heart to the moon . . ."

The age of miracles had returned. As our eyes met, he smiled, like an apologetic adolescent caught napping. Time had stopped.

"Go on," I said encouragingly.

He did.

TRAVELLER'S LUCK

The night journey from Minneapolis to Winnipeg did not look promising. The bus was late, the depot jammed, the crowd spilled over the sidewalks. There was hardly standing room and we kept changing places all the while. To add to our agony till the end we did not know from which gate the bus would leave. At intervals they kept shouting vague instructions which confused us all the more. All inquiries were in vain. There was nothing we could do, except to wait. There was however a little entertainment, unsought for. A beggar, the first we had encountered so far, added a macabre touch of his own. It was the *sari* that did it. We had a young lady come to see us off. The beggar's unsolicited appreciation was a bit embarrassing. In France or Italy it might have passed, but not here. The young lady was clearly upset. We thanked the aesthete and looked the other way. On more mundane level, I discovered, that the dinner basket had been left behind. Also going to Canada was easy, coming back held problems. The prospect of securing a quick return visa did not look too bright. (A groundless fear, it later turned out to be.) Conversation had dropped to a low ebb, when, with surrealistic incoherence, someone poured a tin of turpentine on the floor in front, and there it lay in all its unhurried viscous splendour. It was with mixed feelings that I left Minneapolis. There is a touch of death in every parting, said George Eliot. In this there was doom as well.

When the bus at last pulled in at the Greyhound depot at Winnipeg it was early dawn. Cold, wet morning. One of those drab mornings that drains all cheer out of you and

makes sense of Schopenhauer. I needed to check up on my journey ahead and walked up to the information desk. It was empty. Rather unusual, I thought. After a few minutes a young person did appear on the scene, but all her solicitude for a stranded foreigner ("Welcome to Canada!") failed to elicit the information I needed. She looked through charts, directories, called up colleagues across the counter, in vain. After a series of consultations had been held I was told that my route happened to be off the main line. A man must pay for deviation. I picked up my suitcase, onward to the Y. M. C. A. Outside a soft drizzle had started. A bleak day lay ahead.

When—suddenly the scene changed.

One of my fellow passengers drew up to my side. In a grave but loud whisper, enough to be heard by all present, he said: "We are now in Canada. Do you feel the difference?" From his tone one did not know if he was stating a fact or making fun. Perhaps for his effect he depended on the ambiguity. I did not answer, but the statement was irrefutable. He then asked me what I was doing in the States. I told him. "Oh, I wouldn't care to be a teacher in North America," he replied with a laugh.

His next remark was a bit unexpected. He complimented India on its foreign policy. To Indian ears in the west, as anyone who has travelled in recent months will agree, this must fall like manna dew. Out here the ex-Defence Minister is less a Prometheus and more the Miltonic protagonist. "I'm glad India is neutral," he spoke slowly, "and has decided to remain so, come what may. Some nation needs to be above the battle. I think in the long run her voice will count. It is one of the few voices of sanity left in a world where everybody suspects the other fellow or has designs of his own. It is a good thing that though she has many difficulties of her own she refuses to compromise. In effect India says to all camps and contestants, 'Both you parties are d— fools. I am not going with any of you.' In these days it needs some courage to say that. I like it."

I told him how surprised I was to hear this.

"Without such a middle or third force the world might have moved towards destruction much faster," he added after a pause.

Which was true enough. I tried to explain the Indian position, which so many here prefer to misunderstand. It was folly to imagine that India could ever be bellicose. We were not exactly pacifists, but we certainly did not believe in aggression as a method to settle differences. We had made mistakes, not one but many, but we had also tried to play fair, and in a world like ours that itself was no easy thing.

"I know," he said simply.

He inquired if I was staying in Winnipeg or moving on the same day. I said that I had to get my return visa from the U. S. consulate before I could move. In that case I'll stay too, he said.

The rest of the day we spent together—on Broadway, in the supermarket, in the university campus, till the next day, when our ways parted.

For breakfast we went to "South Seas," a wayside café, cosy and clean. Glancing through the menu card he added with a smile: "I am a truck, you are a Volkswagen. I need more filling. What will you have?" But, after a few minutes, when the waitress brought a ketchup bottle he waived it away with some vehemence. "A ketchup bottle for breakfast! Oh Lord, soon they will set a supermarket in front of you. Everything comes in a package—your 'personalized' ties, cheques, service, even God."

I smiled.

"I mean it. Everything has become phony. In God we trust, we say. Sheer hypocrisy. Then why all these weapons of destruction, these jealousies, these wars? In the early days of imperialism they would convert the heathen. You know why they did it? It was easier to spread one's culture, one's way of life that way. Simply, it eased exploitation. (Today if you say that in the United States they will call you a communist.) Take American foreign policy, in Cuba or China. Oh, that Chiang is a puppet for show and the Americans don't care a damn for him and his stooges. All

that they want is a military base against red China.

"Oh, how the balance of life has been upset. We've fouled up everything, everything. Look at Bertrand Russell and folks like him. They're not fools. They're worried not for nothing. But who cares? Compare this fellow, T—. I usually don't judge people by their looks. But this man *looks* vicious. They're the criminal type. I don't care how big they may be as scientists. I say they're evil. They cannot make things grow. All that they can do is to destroy—and they'll do it too—unless we stop them in time. But, well, he has got a prize from the President. Might get the Peace Prize for all that I know!

"What do I mean by balance of nature? You know what I mean. You have read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, haven't you?"

I told him I had and agreed with what she had to say. For the Oriental mind has the deepest respect for the balance of nature which we have today so profoundly upset in agriculture, in industry, in animal husbandry, in medicine, in human relations.

"Forget that for the moment. Look at these pills, these tranquillisers and all that. Leading to the birth of permanent cripples and human monsters. It is all very depressing. They first create a way of life utterly unnatural and impossible, and then they seek to cure the situation. In most cases the cure is worse than the disease." Mr. Williams was simmering with anger I could see.

Most human activities seemed to arise from a desire to escape from oneself and the nature of reality, I said a little sententiously.

"I know what you mean. Erich Fromm says the same somewhere. Most of the time we're watching T. V., smoking, driving, going places, parties, hand and feet always moving, moving, till the limbs fall apart."

I kept quiet.

"I had been to the World Fair," he continued. "Of course the city was overcrowded, and I didn't wish to be gouged. Can't afford. Fifteen dollars a day for a dingy

hole was not my idea of fair deal. Don't think just because they are having a fair in the city they have a right to fleece you. Supposing they had arranged for rooming apartments for transit visitors? Oh, no, don't tell them that. That would to be so-cialist-ic!

"People go to ecstasies over the Space Age, the 21st Century, the mecca of machines," he spoke reminiscently. "The fools hardly stop to think that they are being invited to contemplate ruins."

I broke in and said how some of our religious sects did precisely that and why. These use the cemetery or the graveyard as background for their solitary musings and esoteric meetings.

"So do I," said Mr. Williams. "It's salutary. We've set up an awful lot of false gods. False values. You've read Fromm's *Art of Loving*? You have? It's a misleading title. "Package Deal", that's what it should have been called. "

"The glamour industry, you know, is the worst offender in this respect. They're creating a false image, of everything. And they've succeeded. The girl who is wooing is wooing for something, for some return. The boy in love is doing exactly the same. Both depend on salvation through objects. It's a new kind of magic. I pity them, for they know no better. Salvation or happiness is always through sacrifice. Nowhere is this more true than in love. But then what will happen to the advertisers in America? So the falsehood is allowed to continue till a whole nation has been morally beaten. The whole show is rotten," he spoke with growing bitterness. "There are factories working day and night. And what marvels are they turning out, do you think? Junk, Junk. All this is contrary to nature. But try to tell them that."

"What about another cup of coffee, Mr. Williams?"

"Not that I mind "

"Two cups of coffee, please," I spoke to the passing waitress.

"Look at the waste of natural resources. Criminal. I think that men who made less fetish of security than we do

were far happier. Ours is a nation of neurotics. What these people need is a perpetual-motion machine. Something that will go on and on and on. And they will do it in a crowd. What herd instinct! And still they talk of individuality, 'personality'. Pah!"

"What do you suggest?"

"I suggest nothing. Rather I suggest a total rejection and a total renewal of human purposes, and plague on Big Business. Take away their T. V., their cars, the heaters, the supermarkets, and their personality flounders. No inner resources, none. Nation of sheep. When I reject her offer of a T. V. set my daughter always tells me. 'Daddy, you are alone.' 'Don't you realise I prefer to be so?' I tell her. I don't think she understands. I think one's capacity for silence is the measure of one's personality. They don't think so.

"Let me tell you something personal. I don't know why I am telling you all this. You seem gentle and sympathetic. Maybe that's why. My wife, she was what you would call a popular figure. Soon my home became what I may fairly describe a hotel lobby. All the smart alecks, the do-nothings dropped in at all hours, especially during the evening, just when I would have liked a little rest, a little home atmosphere. No, I had culture instead. It meant nothing to me. There was nothing to it. It covered nothing.

"Just like the chattering of monkeys, cocksure monkeys at that. They would sometimes go to church, which I never did, but on return start an argument over the new hat somebody was wearing at the service. What did they go to church for? To look at hats."

"For myself I don't like these dogmatic, hierarchic churches. The higher the hierarchy the less Christian it is likely to be. I think the young people today live in a more enlightened, at least more sceptical age. They are unhappy but they have less nonsense of that sort. Their problems are different from these of earlier generations. Most religions refuse to change. They don't speak to us.

"It's the same everywhere. Take medicare. You know

how the profession reacted? Recently the B. B. C. reported a fairminded physician, who said: 'At first I was against it. But now I think it works out well. Once a man falls ill, it's hard to keep up expenses. I've much better success with a person who has no operation worries.' Pity that the happiness of a few should depend on the unhappiness of the many," he spoke sadly.

"Have you any children?" he asked me. .

"*Ce n'est pas possible*. I am not married," I spoke truthfully.

He laughed gently. "Ah, but that's when it hurts most. When you see your own children grow up like bums, so many faceless fools. And you can do nothing about it. Ours is a permissive society. You die morally even before you die physically. Today nearly every parent is a guilty creature, God knows why. Helpless against the tide, they have given up responsibility. No wonder teen-age problems and juvenile delinquency are two of the most flourishing cottage industries of America." The voice sounded hoarse.

In the mystical view of life the birth of every child is an experiment of God, I said.

"I don't know. How much it has to do with God and how much with the preservation of the species. We don't have your idealism. What I would like to see is a franker recognition of facts, so we could build a wall of safety round us, to protect us from a thousand outside threats, from the diseases of civilization. If a man is going around, aimlessly, all the time, or with trollopes for his boon companions, what can you expect? To get away from this mass hysteria and hypnosis one must be able to resist, and not conform. Few have that ability or endurance. I think there is something to be said in favour of the non-adjusted man, though I wouldn't put it the same way as others have done. .

"Love, love. The modern world is full of it, knows nothing else you might say. I am sick of it. On the day I was married I suddenly thought—I have queer thoughts, you know *—supposing my wife were to suffer an accident or

* We all have them, I forgot to tell him.

physical injury, so that there would be no physical relation between us, would I feel cheated? Would I be still willing to marry her? I would. For if you did not your was a price-tag love. You never did love her. And I did." For a moment the voice had lost its harshness.

"It is the same attitude or approach that I would like to see in interpersonal and international affairs. Through love and understanding and sacrifice and not through threat and treachery, force of arms. Politics is dirty, worse it's impersonal. It is hard to be mean in a person-to-person encounter. And yet, when you come to think of it, it's amazing how Injustice seems to have been the main motive of history. Well, the Dark Night is upon us again. We're all worshippers of Kali, you know. But how to avoid going down the drain? Your country ought to show the way. Why doesn't it? Why don't you say something? I've been talking all the time. Have pity on an old man."

"I like to listen to you, Mr. Williams."

"Well, to oblige you, then," he said with a smile. "But what was I saying? Oh, yes, the Drain, the Nuclear Drain. What right have we, has anyone to kill innocent men and women? And children. Amritsar, Guernica, Hiroshima—these are where mankind committed suicide. It takes the taste out of my life, when I think of all this. How do you think all this influences a seventeen-year-old boy?"

"Permit me to tell you," I said after a long silence.

"Please do."

"This is what a fourteen-year-old addict said recently: 'The world stinks. The atomic bomb and everything. My habit (heroin addiction) costs only six dollars a week.' Here's another. As his birthday came along the boy said to his mother, Mom, this will be my last birthday. Why do you say that, my child? asked the anxious mother. Because in the next war we will all be blown up, answered the boy without betraying any emotion. He was just saying what he had heard others say all the time."

"There you are. And this is what makes it worse. We are all so resigned. You can't do anything about it except to

wait for extinction. Perhaps it would be a release from this long nightmare."

"We shall die like dogs," I quoted Hemingway.

"Yes, and didn't he prove it? But, seriously, let us avoid this awful thing—this total destruction. We have no right. We agree to differ, but why must we destroy each other to prove our point? Is there no other way? I can't understand. Is it because we know no better, deserve no better? I think it would be difficult to slash at a fellow who smiles at you, who presents argument, appeals to common decency. It is the only way he can express himself. *He won't kill.*"

"Yes, but that will not prevent others from killing *him*." I argued.

"Take your Gandhi," he said as he cleared the bill. As I attempted to pay, he stopped me. "You pay for dinner. That will be heavier," he said with a laugh.

"O. K."

As we came out of the café and walked down the side-ways there were a few old men and women huddled against the wall. Some were waiting for the bus, or just sitting there—with a vacant look in their eyes, like nothing else in the world. It was all very depressing, especially after the lights and the conversation. Mr. Williams was not untouched by the sight. "They stand outside the stream of life, and they know it," he said. "Madness and despair—is there no middle way?"

And then suddenly turning towards me: "Do you know why I'm here? And talking like this? Escape. Escape from doing the same things, shaving with the same razor, eating the same dinner, escape from the horror of existence. People go to Timbuctoo, Hawaii or Hollywood but they're no better when they come back. So I am like the Ancient Mariner, moving from land to land, trying to escape from myself. It's not easy. The land is parched, the ground's stony, the trees wither. Who will send our roots rain? Oh, ~~here's~~ the bus. Come!"

I went. The Mariner hath his will.

FREEDOM RIDE

Haarlem, Arkansas, Mississippi, Birmingham, Dallas.

Nearly every Indian thinks of segregation when he thinks of America. I was no exception. As a child, like others, I had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, duly heard of Carver and Booker Washington; the Man called White, Jack Dempsey, Jesse Owen, Paul Robeson, Martin Luther King, Ralph Bunche, Mahalia Jackson, Marion Anderson and James Baldwin came later. But I had no ready-made opinion on the subject, no push-button solution to offer. There wasn't one that easy, as I found out on arrival.

In due course I received circular letters from the Congress Of Racial Equality, CORE in short, to help them fight the cause of the Freedom Riders arrested in the South. A *Life* article had already covered the facts. The details were familiar to readers, even in India. Who hasn't heard of Little Rock, the little rock that hurled itself against the Rock of Ages and the Constitution? The story followed the expected pattern, what else could it do? Determination on the part of a few, White and Black, to break through the insidious colour bar and more determination on the part of not a few, especially in the South, to keep the line intact. It was the old, old story, the struggle between privilege and justice, between good and evil. History in the raw, in fact, red in tooth and claw. •

Missouri is a border state and at Columbia, where I work, you don't see too many Negroes about. But they are there, you come upon hardy little boys, selling newspapers at street corners, near the big stores and the post office. You see dusky housewives carry ample washings at the laundromats.

There are sad shanties on the edge of the town, like secret shames tucked away from public view. But you also see some of them drive by, in gloomy grandeur. (Not all Negroes are poor nor is a car, in America, a sign of wealth. Incidentally, a Negro never buys a small car.) Some were studying in the University. I confess I did not know them well enough. My own class contained one, a nice young lady. But I did not wish to embarrass her, and treated her just as I treated everybody else.

One day as I was walking down the corridor my eyes suddenly caught a brief notice which I might have easily missed. A film on Freedom Riders would be shown in the Arts and Science Auditorium the next day in the afternoon. I had no class then and decided to go.

The hall was half empty when I walked in a few minutes before the show was scheduled to begin. It never was full. But the few who had come, including at least one livewire member of the faculty, were concerned about it, one way or the other. Not all were friendly towards integration, as the question hour would reveal.

The question—of segregation, but the speaker left that unsaid—was being discussed all over the country, at every level. The film would show, said the sad and thoughtful local secretary, in the most direct manner, the real significance of Freedom Ride. He then called upon the chief speaker, Colvin, to say a few words. Colvin was a Negro student and had taken part in CORE's programme. He began with a story, the kind of gag that is almost universal here. President Kennedy had received a ring from Premier Khrushchev. "Mr. President, we shall soon be sending a man into outer space. When are you going to do it?" After a slight pause the President replies: "How do you expect me to put a man into outer space when I cannot so much as put Mrs—(a Negro lady) into the Greyhound bus?" This was followed by laughter, uneasy laughter. The state of Missouri, the speaker continued, had agreed to take part in the National Programme of CORE and the students had a particular responsibility. He also announced that the film,

which would be short, was to be followed by a discussion. "If we can't talk about it here, we can't talk about it anywhere."

The lights turned off, we saw the Riders, thirteen in all, white and black. On May 4, 1961, the group had set out on a fateful journey to test their conviction, to test also how far the Supreme Court's decision that segregation was unlawful was being given effect to in the country, which in this case meant the South. Each member was presented in turn. It was like seeing the ghost of some old martyr come back, the same mixture of pity and inner strength, resolve and resignation, the same efforts to do better and fare worse. In my bones I felt that they would win—one day. But before that day arrived many of them would also lose their lives.

The President of CORE, a middle-aged Negro, a man with immense dignity, gave the commentary. The Freedom Ride, he said, was a beginning to push Jom Crow off the perch. Part of the journey had gone off without a hitch. The Riders had expected the worst, and were not disappointed. The lull did not last. The first violence occurred at Rock Hill. It began, as it almost always did, at the White Waiting Room at the bus terminal. The Riders of course did not expect to be served and wisely carried their own lunch. But, no, they had no right to go in, not even the White Riders, whom the local roughs hated even more than they hated the Black. All the while the local police was busy maintaining 'law and order' which meant siding with popular prejudice, rather than the cause of justice. The Riders were beaten mercilessly. As blows rained upon these defenceless defenders of the law of the land, there rose in the background the boom of a chant: O-O-O FREE-EEEE-DOM RI-I-I-DE! In one brief moment we had supped full of horror and human dignity. It made you feel as if you were present at a primitive ritual. It was you who were beaten and beating. But such is the hidden power of sympathy that even the hurt did not hurt. We who led a shamefully sheltered, 'cultured' life were glad that at least in the spirit we were out there, with them, the Riders. A strange silence

fell over the audience. The film held us in its grip, In fact we had forgotten that we were looking at a film.

The Ride continued—through hostile countryside, dotted with stubby little towns, armouries of hatred and vengeance, men's teeth chattering in rage. There was a break at Birmingham, perhaps the hardest nut to crack. As the commentator pointed out, in a voice from which all passion had been drained out, the expression of hate on their faces was remarkable. Nothing brings out the animal in man as hate and anger. But why had the Riders been left without police protection? A wonderful explanation was offered. It was Mother's Day at Birmingham. The policemen were all visiting their mothers. (The audience tittered.)

A fresh difficulty arose. The Greyhound bus now refused to carry them further. One bus had already been set on fire. The company did not wish to risk further loss, which was understandable. So they had to ride by air. (This cost money, one reason why CORE had to ask for subscription.) Beaten, battered, bleeding, the journey continued. It had turned into a symbol, of the injustice of segregation everywhere.

Why hadn't the Federal Government taken stronger measures? The Federal Government had its own reasons. It was playing for time. President Kennedy's redoubtable brother, Bobby, wanted things to 'cool off' before taking any decisive action. (This, it must be said, he did in the case of Meredith.). But, as the commentator pointed out, with some sadness and perhaps suppressed rage, time is *always* ripe to fight evil. (See Martin Luther King, "Why We Can't Wait," *Saturday Review*, May 30, 1964.)

And so the Riders pushed ahead through enemy country, still more foul. The President himself had tried to contact the Governor. He could not be reached. He had gone out fishing or on some such equally important activity.

The next act of violence was specially directed towards newspapermen. We saw in quick succession some horror pictures that made us feel as if we were in the blackest pit. It would need the talent of a Goya or Dante to record it. Who said, It Can't Happen Here? It did. If the wages of

sin is death, that mob was dead, dead to decency, to democracy, to Christianity, to humanity. Before us lay a newspaper reporter, hardly out of his teens, with stitches all over his face, hands and forehead. In weak but uncomplaining voice he told his story : "They kick and hit me. On my stomach. I crouched. They hit me all over the stomach. I felt sick. I fell to the ground. The last thing I remember was that somebody put me into a taxi. Then when I wake up I find myself on this bed. But," he added in a voice bereft of all bitterness, "we are going to keep trying. We are going to win." He smiled faintly as he spoke the last words, it went like a knife through the audience. He had won, his battle.

The next scene took us to a prayer meeting held in the city's Baptist Church. Outside on the walls hung in bold letters : GOD FORGIVE THEM. We saw 'them' too, men and boys with distorted visages, prowling about with pipes, sticks and guns. And still the prayer continued. The city had declared Martial Law. Darkness at Noon. The best and the worst in man had met closer than ever before in the city's troubled history. Only a church wall stood between. Inside the church the sermon was heard with rapt attention. In simple, moving words the preacher pointed out that if physical death was the price for freedom, they would be willing to pay that price. Nothing could be more redemptive, he said.

The Riders now pushed on towards New Orleans. Some of them had been brought up in this part of the country and were filled with childhood memories. To have seen what I have seen, to see what I have to see. They could not get over the feeling that a war was on, not only here, but everywhere. Segregation was the same everywhere. The bus had become a tomb, someone said. Would the dead arise ?

As the bus moved by waving fields and greens the Riders sang lustily : AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL. There was no irony in their voice but plenty of it in the situation. When they stopped at a midway halt the police were waiting for them. As they got off the bus and walked towards the

White Restaurant they were stopped by the police chief and his men. Three times he asked them to move up. It was clear the Riders did not wish to obey. Immediately they were huddled into a waiting Black Maria and taken to the local prison. A mock trial followed at the end of which they were fined 200 dollars and two months in jail. "Breach of peace," said the Court. The evil that Mississippi calls justice, said the voice of the commentator. The Dean of the Yale Law School wrote an open letter against the judgment. Nothing happened. It was a cry in the wilderness. The South could not care less.

For a few moments we saw the prisoners, herded together like animals in a cage. As for the women, there were black-and-white drawings instead of the real figures. This was even more gruesome and ghastly. And, oh, the wailing!

Tears of centuries were in our eyes as we sat fixed, dumb in a dark hall.

The Freedom Ride, the relentless voice went on, was an expedition into America's conscience. It was only a beginning, a breakthrough, directed not merely to legal equality which, in the eyes of law, the Negro already enjoyed, it was also to free his trapped spirit and the trapped spirit of those who denied him the basic rights of life.

"We will see that day come round," sang a voice from behind.

Before we knew the film was over. It had taken hardly thirty minutes.

It was now question hour. As the screen was being rolled up, Colvin came up on the stage. "What does it all mean, to you and me?" he began slowly. "Someone somewhere is discovering a new force—to combat evil, the evil that treats a man differently because of his colour, treats him as a second-class citizen though the Constitution does not permit any such discrimination. This is not fair and we will resist it. But of course the method which we use is non-violence. It is really not a new thing. We have used it and we will continue to use it to our advantage. It is only in this

way and not in any other that we can accomplish something enduring. How can a man strike when you smile at him or shake hands with him? It is the Christian logic, it is the weapon that Gandhi used in his Freedom Ride. It is something that comes from within and not from a pulpit, a lecture hall. You cannot be argued into it. It is not a matter for argument but conviction. It is born of your conscience, your participation, your soul-searching that you find and adopt the non-violent way. . . . Any questions?"

After a slight uneasy pause the ice was broken. As always it was a voice from the back benches.

"Has not a man the right to discriminate? (A chill went through the audience as it heard the devil's advocate opening the argument.)

"Yes," replied Colvin coolly. "A man has the right to discriminate, but not because of colour alone, not without knowing the person."

"Why not?"

"Because we hold as inviolable the Constitution that all men are created equal and have equal rights."

"That is not a literal statement. In the Constitution it is also said that a man has the right to choose how he will behave, with whom he will associate."

Here the young faculty member stood up. "No, a man has no right to discriminate like that. Not in all the States. Twenty-six openly forbid the kind of discrimination you are referring to."

"What about the rest?"

There was no answer.

Someone asked: "What is the Missouri Restaurant Association's attitude?"

"They've just opened up," said someone.

Another voice announced that in nearby Kansas City too there had been a local drive towards integration.

"You've experience of working with CORE. Does any experience stand out?"

"Nothing special," answered Colvin. "I've not had to face physical violence, so far, I don't know if you wanted to

know that. Of course working with CORE was itself an experience."

"What are your immediate plans?"

"CORE has done as much as it can. It is now our turn to take it up. For instance, when you go home during summer and you come across any segregation in the matter of eating houses or restaurants you (the audience was nearly all-White) go into the Negro restaurant. That is one way to help."

"Do you find out what the customers want?"

"We try to argue with them, if they'll allow us."

"If you find yourself unwanted in a neighbourhood would you still force your way into it?"

"Well, we never force our way. We've never done so. We claim courtesy, if not justice. Sometimes shops fear loss of business. It does not always happen like that. The local 'Spudnut' increased business by 30%."

"When you chose to show the sadistic police chief were you not dramatising?" asked a critical voice.

"No, we showed other pictures too, less dramatic. This was obviously important, and couldn't be left out."

"What is going to be the true solution?"

"No one knows. At the moment CORE is the answer. Put, for God's sake, do something."

"Well, where do we go from here?"

"That's what we have to find out," said Colvin.

Here the faculty member got up again, and gave what I thought was an admirable peroration. "Where do we go from here? All men are created equal. You've heard that phrase before, you've heard it here too. Well, it's not a legal formula. It is a moral principle, what is called an ideal. The real problem is to have an equal chance and not merely doing away with a few unpleasant features of segregation. If segregation is done away with, even then the Negro may not rise above a certain social standard. The right to enter a restaurant, or join a school, is a side issue. Of course, as you have heard, in this struggle to solve the American Dilemma, the technique of non-violence is the only one worth using.

This may delay the triumph of the cause. But no matter. For what we are fighting and hoping for is that when these minor iniquities have been done away with, America will become a place where Negro and White, everybody, can develop his potentiality to the fullest. We go from here to Democracy. Our history is a search for freedom."

The meeting was over. As I walked back home, alone, against the purple rhetoric of an evening sky Byron's lines floated back on the wings of memory :

*Yet, Freedom ! yet thy banner, torn, but flying,
Streams like the thunderstorm against the wind.*

Ride, for ever ride, even if the world were to end to-night.

MEET THE BEAT

Extremes meet. Where the beatniks, 'beat' for short, are concerned East is West. In the east New York, in the west California, the honour is shared about equally by both. As it happened I went to California before I could go to New York. Left to myself I might not have encountered the Brotherhood, for I have all the backwoodsman's fear of big cities and of 'hell's angels'. But the friend with whom I was staying was an old San Franciscan and rather eager to complete my education. Thanks to him I did not have to go out to meet the beat. Instead a beat Chief came to see me, an unheard of compliment. But, when you come to think of it, not so strange after all. Did I not come from the land of the "Dharma bum"? And isn't 'beat' itself a synonym for beatitude?

Out here one can hardly avoid the specimen. They swarm over the place. Their bleat can be heard even in our own backyards. As a sociologist has said, We are a nation of beats. (For 'nation' read 'race') Dirty shirts, dirtier canvas shoes, pale knights and ladies gay, *les belles dames avec merci*, with the seven sorrows in their wide open eyes. Come to think of it, I remember how in a cafe near the University of California at Berkeley I had scored a minor triumph one evening. The victory was generously conceded, not to me but to my apparel, *dhoti* and *chadar*. As I was wobbling across the floor one of the aesthetes said, 'Aaaww!'. My chaperone turned towards me. 'Thou hast conquered', he said, with a proprietary smile. I could have burst with pride.

The real encounter was to come later. In the meantime my thoughtful hostess provided a little briefing, lest I

succumb to the eloquence to the new elite. Among other things she told me that the beats had developed a party line of their own. There were stores where you could buy torn shoes, dirty shirts. The rags came from some rag shop. In fact Beat Industry was on the way to becoming Big Business. For me this was news.

"In fact," my mentor continued, "you've to join the club and wear the uniform." A little later the conversation turned to C—, whom we were expecting the next day. C— was no ordinary beat. No, he was an "intellectual", counted among friends Aldous Huxley, Blackett, C. P. Snow and Alan Watts. He lived in a shack, had no regular job because he could keep none. Married, but, etc. .

"By the way, there are Negro beats as well," she told me. Lots of them. It's a kind of escape mechanism. The Negro beat is accepted, at least he hopes to be accepted, by the White beat." Turning towards me she added with a smile, "Some of them put on turbans and try to pass themselves off as Indians. Or mystics. Phew!"

I remembered seeing some of these and wondering at the compost.

"Phony," she said with a yawn. Obviously the subject was not much to her liking.

The briefing was rather brief, hardly adequate for what was to follow the next morning.

The next morning C— drove in, for even beats have a car. Short, shaggy hairs, with his spectacles, he seemed to have been shot into the universe without having been consulted. Full of undivine discontent, he was also full of conversation. It, however, tended to be a little onesided. I didn't mind. I am a good listener, though I don't expect my friends to believe this.

We began with Huxley. He was surprised to see my little book on him and was intrigued by the subtitle: 'A Cynical Salvationist'. Cynical? "He has passed that stage," he told me. After a pause he added, "In terms of his grasp the man is utterly fabulous. Profound love of humanity too, but people just won't see that."

I confessed that I was among "the people". Huxley was certainly worried, more than the rest, over the prospect of war and genocide, about human stupidity and perversion, but whether he had a "profound love of humanity" I doubted. *Brave New World* was such a good book because it was un-human. C— did not like the way I put it.

"What about Savage?" he asked.

"Is Mr. Huxley Savage?" I countered.

We dropped the topic.

"He sees more with one eye than most people see with two," he added after a slight pause. "You know he has no possessions now. It was all burnt down. He can travel light. He loves to travel. He will be here soon. I think you should stay on and meet him."

The prospect frightened me. But C— was quick to assure me. Mr. Huxley was human and even, on occasions, humorous. And he told me a story. Once Huxley was returning from the University of California at Berkeley, where he was a frequent visitor and doing some kind of research with a Ford grant, two young ladies came running on the sidewalk. "Oh, sir," they panted, "may we take a picture?"

"Why, certainly." But he wanted to include C—, who happened to be present but naturally refused. "I stay here," he said, "you are the Hollywood star."

The cameras clicked. But, alas, the girls were not content with the picture. They started an intellectual interchange which had a disastrous dénouement. "Oh, sir, we **sure** feel honoured," they gushed. "*1984* is the *best* book we've read."

"It's a *very* good book," agreed Mr. Huxley. "But I didn't write it." Pointing to C—, "He wrote it."

C— laughed. In which we joined.

The conversation now turned to Science and the Modern Dilemma. Oh both C—had much to say.

"We cannot do without it and yet it has castrated man from reality. Man made machine and now he has himself become machine-altered. And these machines are neither safe nor impotent. In fact their potency is essentially

destructive and poses a serious threat to man. This is an enormously important thing to remember. And what is it but a kind of suicide?"

We agreed. Had not, I remembered, Lewis Mumford said the same thing over and over again, till nobody cared to listen and he had more or less shut up?

"Even in mathematics there are what they call moral expectations," C— went on. "But where men are concerned there is the question of uniqueness as well as of context. To forget that is to fall into a Lewis Carroll universe. And that is what has happened to our world. Topsy-turvy, that's the word. And then there is no longer any reference point." He stopped for a moment, then spoke with sudden heat, "What's Man for? What is a tree for? Does anybody know?" He asked no one is particular and himself provided the answer, a negative answer. "No one knows, no one cares. Did you know that because of our interference the Californian Redwood trees are now dying? Are we to assume that if men are to use the forest, the trees must die? That Man is nothing but a murderer, a murderer of Reality?" There was a strange far-away look in his eyes.

"Botanize over one's mother's grave," I added solemnly.

"But to believe is not to be rigid," he said after a pause. "Philosophy and Religion have failed in one area. They had no base line or reference. Still don't have. God is a regional concept. But 2 plus 2 is not regional. It is universal, true for all. I am not suggesting that 2 plus 2 is more *important*. What we need is some universal verifiable terms of reference. There is none at the moment." He fell silent and then said in a different voice, "Except the threat of illumination. The Burden of Awareness. Previously it was God who had the power—to rule and to punish, to create and to destroy. Now Man has taken over. But unregenerate Man, and who will give us remission from this, save Man from man? Older solutions just don't fit. And so here we are—in an exciting, absurd period of history." He seemed to be tired, angry, afraid, broken. A scene from the existential drama was

being enacted for my benefit. The intellectual caught in his own trap. No exit. I kept quiet.

"Mathematics," he continued, "once queen of sciences. Now a whore. She destroys personality. Even in medicine. (Here my friend, the doctor, squirmed uneasily. One never knew what would come next.) The healing hands now rest on technological crutch. No man walks alone, walks upright. The computers have eliminated the one thing that made cure possible and worthwhile—the patient-doctor relationship."

"It is no longer a person you cure, but a case. The person is a Displaced Person. We are NOT AT HOME," I spoke sententiously. "And never shall be."

"Exactly. We have displaced ourselves," he agreed, and let off a hoarse laugh.

"But what is the solution?" inquired Mrs M— from a corner of the room. Her voice sounded a trifle tired.

"Solution? Regeneration is woman's deepest concern," C— seemed to be speaking to himself. The voice was serious, but perhaps there was a touch of irony in it. "Women must have answers here and now. I have read tons of medical journals. Just bunk. There is no 'solution' anywhere. I can tell you that. Going through these 'learned papers' I sometimes feel sorry for the birds that had to leave the trees which we cut down in order to make pulp, newsprint for us. You have seen our newspapers, of course?" he turned towards me. "Not worth the paper it's printed on, don't you think?"

I did. But when you agree conversation becomes both unnecessary and impossible. So I changed the topic.

My friend had described C— as one who knew the beats inside out. Himself he was high up in the hierarchy. I didn't want to miss my chance.

"What kind of work are you doing now?" I asked him.

"I was a physicist. Was, at any rate. But recently I had a heart attack. Now I am working as a consultant. I also write. Do T. V. programmes. I was also for sometimes on the International Commission for Drainage. (A Kafka

touch, I thought.) It has an office in New Delhi. (Has it?) You know Indian canals have a long history."

Yes, I had an engineer in the family. Leaving drains and canals behind, I asked him something abrupt and different. "What do you think makes life worth living?"

"An attempt to fulfil one's potentialities," he answered readily.

"In terms of--?" I continued

"In terms of Reality, what else?" In terms of the intellect—within the context of the world of course—in terms of the many references, in terms of continuity. I think the attempt to find meaning itself is more important, for no answer or achievement can be final. I would however add that all attempts at uniformity are harmful. Freedom is variation."

• "What is the beatnik's or the Outsider's philosophy, if any? Is it only a temperamental reaction? Or a reasoned revolt? And revolt in terms of what? Against modernism? Against life itself? And is the whole thing responsible or irresponsible?" I fired my questions

"I see what you mean," he spoke soberly. "Let me draw an analogy first. When a vacuum is created, a partial vacuum, every kind of turbulence may occur within it. For the generation of turbulence too. The second point I would make is that when you try to pierce the vacuum, the noise produced depends upon the nature of the piercing. Hit it with a hammer, and it will probably explode. The splinters will scatter everywhere. The noise made will depend on the size too."

"To understand the beatniks," he went on to say, "one must understand the nature of the vacuum as it exists in the world today. Science has replaced many old truths and assumptions. And given no new morality. Mere morality is not enough either. It will be said that science by itself cannot do that. Precisely. Then what we need is a New Humanism, not the old. Humanism by itself is no good, as we have found it. It is Humanism that has created this Dilemma or Vacuum, a vacuum that swallowed up Marilyn

Monroe, by the way. The girl is a symbol of our culture. Someone should write the tale and point the moral."

"But supposing the beats are accused, as they have often been, of being decadent and irresponsible, what would you say?" I asked. This was bound to draw fire, and it did.

"I would maintain," he said, "that they *are* decadent and irresponsible. But, tell me, today who is responsible? The politicians, the men in Big Business? You see if the beats had been responsible, they would have started a new religion. That's why they are interested in Buddhism, by the way. I do not say that they understand it, but do the scholars either? What man today needs is a new faith, a new awareness, not in a distant God or anachronistic institutions, but in himself, in the human reality. Yes, the individual must hold himself responsible. And that is not easy. For, if you look at it, today not even the scientist is alone or himself, he is part of a group activity and of course there is always the pressure of politics, of insane nationalism. He has lost his individuality, his privacy, his initiative, his opportunity to be creative. In a way they too are with us as we are with them. We must realise the nature of this absurdity. There is no easy way out. The beats are a symptom, they are an end-product.

"The excess sugar of a diabetic culture?" I queried. He nodded assent.

"If one had to look for antecedents and predecessors, where would you look for?"

"Anywhere you like. Whenever a man is trying to do something new and different. That creates a partial vacuum. But I don't like the word 'Beat'. 'Nego', I think, is better. They are negative, if you think social values are positive. Whoever is original is a 'Nego'. We have had 'Negos' always. Jesus, Buddha, Blake, Nietzsche. It's a roll of honour. But the old vacuum was, by comparison, cleaner. Christ could succeed, if he succeeded at all, because of the background of Judaism; Buddha because of Vedic India. Because of the nature of the Opposition. Today there is no

such opposition, no opportunity for the truly creative individual. What else can the individual do? You know they have called us Rebels without a Cause."

"The Centre cannot hold and mere anarchy is let loose upon the world?"

"Yes. But Yeats was too Irish to be a good Negro. He was a Rhetoro." We both laughed.

Then he turned towards me. "I was expecting the emergence of a new ethics from India. Why did it not come?"

It was a long story, I told him O Sadachar Samiti, what was there to tell?

"Do you see any hope?" I put my last question.

"Oh yes I am alive. There is hope because we are talking. By the way, I do not think for a moment that total destruction is by itself an evil. What we must do is to recognise the nature of the Opposition, Vacuum and Being today. There is nothing in our nature or society that is totally evil. Murder is not (What is war?) Lying is not (What is diplomacy?) Cheating is not (What is business?) Then what is wrong, the one thing that is always wrong? I should say intellectual dishonesty is that one evil. From which everything else follows. You are right, we are not hypocrites, but ignorant." The voice fell. He added sadly, as if he was talking to himself, "We live in a society built on suicide."

THE EXISTENTIALIST WITNESS

Chaque homme dans sa nuit

What is an Existentialist? asked a bewildered Hollywood actress who had been assigned a role described, simply, as "an existentialist". Free love and futility, Parisian pornography and Teutonic brooding, answered a local wiseacre. Very largely an exercise in the art of misusing the verb "to be", said another. Neither was an answer, but may have served the purpose for which it had been given.

Philosophy of night or philosophy in the manner of a thriller, Existentialism is easier to describe than to define. It is not a single school or system. In spite of the dubious or dazzling dialectics in which it has often draped and defended its loud Nothingness, it is perhaps a mood more than a philosophy strictly speaking, a mood that has suddenly erupted and become almost an obsession. Of its two main streams one stems from the cafés and nightclubs of Paris while the other comes via the Old Testament, the Buddha, the German and French thinkers between the war years. The popular and the philosophic fringe, so to speak.

A diverse group, it includes Jews, Catholics, Protestants as well as men of no conceivable religion. Roughly there are two varieties: religious and atheistic. Also while some insist on relationship, social, supra-social no less than personal, *I-Thou*, the majority are content to exalt and confine themselves to the individual. 'The Individual' was the self-chosen epitaph of the putative father of the modern movement, Søren Kierkegaard. No less a rationalization than other forms of morality and religion, Existentialism philo-

sophizes the alienation of the individual from self, society and the universe. That is his 'absurd' starting-point. But instead of filling up the blank, most of the existentialists analyze, experience and encounter the Blank of Being, *shunya*, as if it were the be-all and end-all of all existence. In his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919) Karl Jaspers had said: "This book makes sense only to people who are beginning to wonder about themselves, to reflect on themselves, to see existence as full of questions." In the more explicit words of Max Scheler, "We are the first generation in which man has become fully and thoroughly problematic to himself; in which he no longer knows what he essentially is, but at the same time also knows that he does not know." Gone are the sunny days of Greek philosophy, the early days of Descartes in search of a method, and the high noon of the Enlightenment, the *ancien régime* of reason and law. Michael Polyani hit the nail when he said that nihilism is a complete *non sequiter* from the premises of secular rationalism.

Tainted, often, with the morbid brush, the existentialists are, almost without exception, haunted by despair, disgust and, above all, by dread, the dread of Death and Nothingness, though they react to it differently. Calling themselves and their effort at understanding *Existenz* as *authentic* they broadly hint that the rest of us, the unbothered ones, are suffering from common forms of "self-deception", some *maya* of *mauvais foi*, bad faith. They alone have seen clearly into the heart of reality or real experience of things as they are—a dark rather than a luminous Nothing. Absurd but true, it is the only truth, they imply, available to man today. But, who knows, for the tough outsider it may have been so always, "the terror and absurdity of existence".

It is of course not a new discovery, even if it is only now that we hear so much about it. Among factors responsible for this upsurge (arranged not in order of merit) are: the disappearance of the old religious certainty. God is dead, Nietzsche announced the new gospel with glee. But then he must have been alive at some time. Who killed him, when

and how? Science and objectivity, the existentialists might answer, if they were interested in the investigation. The fact is, an impersonal science has practically eliminated the person from the universe. In such a denuded universe man can but be a "useless passion", only *das Man*. A frank record of life-experiencing-the-world, a return to experience, existentialism is also a human protest against this facelessness, elimination or suicide. It resents all forms of Mechanization and other varieties of conformity and utilitarian ethics that tend to submerge and destroy the individual in the name of the pack, the herd, the State, the voter, the consumer. It is also a reaction against doctrines of Evolution and the emphasis on competition, of politics marked by violence and injustice, the real and unspeakable horrors of regimentation, the imminence of genocide, of world-wide destruction. In brief, the futility of an industrial society without sanctions, the continued threat to personality and selfhood, explain its concerted or interested strategy of personal experience and freedom in a closed and collapsing universe. It is the turning of the little self upon itself, the dead end of decadence, the broken mirror held up to a civilization on trial, the literature of extreme situation.

By definition Existentialism is an encounter with authentic living, *Lebenswelt*. It is not a gloss on living, hiding behind some simplistic or elaborate *theoria* of existence. This has not prevented some of them from erecting tortuous, Teutonic superstructures. But Existentialism is nothing if not lived. Basically, it is the difference between two propositions: "All men are mortal" and "You are going to die". The first of these is impersonal and objective; the second, personal and subjective, is existential. Your *existence* is at stake, existence that precedes essence and all talk of essence. Your decision made in the face of death is a greater part of your reality, that is your existence, than all your ability to manipulate numbers and machines, or in a dull, sub-human way, to conform. According to their grammar of assent, or dissent, the religious and atheistic existentialists ask different questions: the religious existentialists want to know "What

shall I do to be saved?" while the atheists ask "What shall I do to be free?" To the uninitiate these two statements might look like Tweedledum and Tweedledee but in fact there is a deep difference. It is the difference between Kierkegaard and Sartre, between the Hebrew prophets and the Buddha.

In the existentialist crowd Pascal stands at the crossroad. A brilliant mathematician, he felt obliged to rebel against the rationalism of the age. In a blind mechanic universe he anxiously looked for final and personal significance. The eternal silence of the infinite spaces frightened him. Why were they empty? (Now perhaps the silences are frightened of our astronauts.) Pascal was worried by man's first and last question: Who has put me here? and why? By whose order and direction have this time and place been allotted to me? An existentialist born before his time, Pascal's trouble lay in the fact that he was both a scientist and a Christian, a Christian who found it hard to accept Authority and felt obliged to make a personal decision and verification—the record of his mystical experience is matchless—of the truths of religion. In the process he was torn to pieces.

Pascal was followed by other voices, more shrill. Of these odd fellows who helped the movement on its way and gave it a new look the chief was Kierkegaard, patron-saint of artist-philosophers. But in spite of his barbed attack on Christianity he remained, in a sense, within the fold. His real problem, by no means solved to date, was: How to be a Christian in (spite of) Christendom? Faith for him had become largely a matter of "fear and trembling". However absurd, one must choose and leap—to faith. With him may be mentioned the Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoevsky, who wanted to kiss the feet of suffering humanity, and announced his image of tortured poor souls as *Notes from the Underground*, a telling title. From Germany was heard the mighty, if broken, accents of Frederick Nietzsche, half-blind prophet of the Superman, which was later to become the theme of a Shavian comedy. Nietzsche lashed against the lies of petty moralities the religion of slaves, *Sklavenreligion*. Dead

against mediocrity and conformity he taught—rather an excited and exciting teacher—dangerous doctrines which he called the Joyful Wisdom. Live Dangerously, he held. He proclaimed the old news with a new banner headline : God is Dead. The Fates had their revenge when he met an early death, as an idiot. Some have claimed Karl Marx as half-way an existentialist, since it was the purpose of his *Manifesto* to change the world instead of writing philosophies or interpretation. The psychic determinism inherent in the thought of Sigmund Freud does not qualify him to belong to the inner circle of existentialists. But in his own way he made clear, with evidence culled from ancient myths and ultra-modern living, the presence of a pre-logical self underlying our conventional image, the face behind the mask.

Most of these precursors were lonely men, maladjusted, abnormal, whose private agonies were part of the wider sickness of society and who help us, with a slant, to understand ourselves and the age better. Our representative men, they are a broken mirror, the broken world, to use Marcel's phrase, in which to behold the image of a society in decay. Not a flattering picture but true. In spite of an occasional, or habitual, posing both the Christian and the atheistic existentialists are trying to be honest. They know, none better, that the enemy of self-knowledge is self-deception. Through all the anxiety and shipwreck they are moving towards some insight. Someone has described Existentialism as a road to Golgotha. But "at the end of the road one may as easily find two thieves as find the suffering Saviour". That depends, perhaps less on the nature of one's decision than on one's character, one's will and what one really wishes to become. This explains the different emphases and the schools among the existentialists, within and without the Church.

In the twentieth century the more wellknown, but not all, of the existentialists have been atheists, or look so. The chief of these is Martin Heidegger, the former Magi of Freiburg. The simplest way to describe his chief obsession is, to use his own words, Nothing. Out of this Nothing we may, if we follow him adroitly and long enough, work out

the possibility of a Being. Near and yet removed from him is the problematic Frenchman, Jean-Paul Sartre, who has all the makings of a cult figure. Recently he added to his stature by rejecting the Nobel Prize for Literature. Sartre is a clever, consistent and complicated thinker and has worked out the logical sequence of a Godless existence with a thoroughness (and sometimes tiresomeness) that puts his Teutonic archetypes into the shade. His role in the French Resistance, his one essay in heroism, partly explains the origin and type of Existentialism associated with his name. In his eye the ability and the decision to say 'No' to everything—including the German Occupation and the Nobel award—constitute man's only true existence and freedom. He is an individualist and heretic of a high order. Here is a sample of his more serious logic and the metaphysics of meaninglessness: "What man needs is to find himself again and to understand that nothing can save him from himself, not even a valid proof of the existence of God."

Christian writers like Berdyaev (Eastern Church), Maritain (Catholic) and Paul Tillich (Protestant) have been worried by the atheistic strain in modern existentialism. In his essay, "The Meaning of Contemporary Atheism", while discounting the antics of atheists, Maritain has not failed to notice the element of "greatness and generosity" among its bolder spirits who risk disapproval but do not give up the right to think for themselves. Maybe, Maritain himself generously concedes, the rigorous atheists are a little nearer to God than those who believe perfunctorily or as a part of habit and convenience than out of any genuine seeking or encounter. Thus, existentialism has, one might say, a message for the faithful or the so-called faithful. It forces them to examine the foundations of their easy faith, to tear away all sense of false security. Albert Camus, once a leading light of the atheistic school, was basically devout and truly interested in the problem of sanctity without, however, being tied to the apronstrings of a Church. He almost resented that God did not exist (but how did he know?) and felt like crying out: "My God, my God, why have you for-

saken me?" but *not* "Father, into thy hands I command my spirit".

Nicholas Berdyaev raised his powerful voice in favour of freedom and the divine in man and history. He also violently protested against the "Thingification" of modern society, criticised both Capitalism and Communism and pleaded in vain for a "personalist socialism". Born in India he might have become an angry *sarvodaya* leader, a specimen sadly wanting. Unlike most existentialists Karl Jaspers, originally a physician and psychologist, does not reject science and reason. Unsparing in his probe of Man in the Modern Age Jaspers has tried to show how through the existentialist impasse one may reach faith and "transcendant thinking" but without joining any of the religious sects.

The Catholics have their own brand of existentialism and imply that they alone have, and have the right to be, the genuine article. Catholic writers draw, as a rule, a distinction between "natural theology" which any person with the gift of reason can find out for himself and other forms of truth of which the Pope is the repository. This has lead some Catholic thinkers to reject existentialism (which rejects authority and all forms of revealed religion) as a heresy and nihilistic. But others, more perceptive, have seen that beyond assent to authority the need for a personal encounter, or verification, remains the heart of the religious life. In the writings of these men, like, Jacques Maritain and Gabriel Marcel, the existentialist note is easy to observe.

The existentialist note has been a marked feature of Hebrew thought, old as well as new. *The Book of Job* is an existentialist classic or ought to be. In modern Hasidic tradition no one has stood out so well as Martin Buber, even if his famous formula, *I-Thou*, has been ruined by repetition by inferior thinkers. The unique self of Kierkegaard, Buber has rightly pointed out, can become so only through relation. In his own mystical way, Buber has been a close critic of the reign of impersonality (*It*). As he puts it, "He who lives with *It* alone is not a man". There is "one *Thou* who never becomes *It*", and that is God. Buber does not, however,

equate the human self with God, who is always "over against" us.

It may be mentioned that Communist ideology has always been a little suspicious of the intense individualism of existentialists or, what from their point of view must appear worse, their affiliation with the Churches. Artists and thinkers displaying, however subtly, the fact that they do not belong is, in their view, anything but healthy. Not the Pope but the Communist Party has banned Sartre.

Most existentialists hold that a rational or straight forward communication of their theme or situation is not possible. What they are offering is not a set of rational propositions. They must be difficult, obtuse, in order to be genuine. Or, as Kierkegaard put it, I conceive it to be my duty to create difficulties. Faithful existentialists have followed that advice and example. Hence in existential exegesis "indirect communication" figures so prominently. There is in this a certain resemblance to Zen Buddhism, but with far less finesse. As with Nietzsche, existential philosophers like Heidegger, Jaspers and Sartre move dangerously away from expository to evocative forms of writing.

In the twisted existential hierarchy of art Dostoevsky occupies a position of his own, followed at a distance by men like Kafka, Gide, Malraux, Sartre, Faulkner, Hemingway, Camus, Baldwin and others. But more than fiction poetry offers a natural outlet to the existential insights. Robert Frost, though not a fellow traveller, has voiced many an existential mood, even if he did not care much for its theory or the group. Earlier we have Holderlin, Heidegger's patron-saint, and Rilke, an archetype for all "disinherited minds". Even T. S. Eliot, in spite of his pedantry, in his exploration of hollow lives and innuendoes on the falsities of modern living comes close to the existentialists. In Graham Greene's novel, *The Third Man*, Lime the racketeer, speaks, presumably, for all of us: "In these days nobody thinks of human beings. Government don't, so why should we?" Auden's wit smartly skips over as well as tumbles into the existentialist abyss. Incidentally, Eliot has written a perceptive Introduction to

Pascal's *Pensées*, while Auden has edited a Selections from Kierkegaard. The drama is perhaps closest to the existentialist ethos. Some of O' Neill's plays are existential in effect. Hemingway's "A Clean Well-lighted Place" is lighted up with the thoughts of loss: "It was all nothing and man is nothing too." A typical existential play would be Sartre's *No Exit*, a hell built by and around the ego, from which the protagonists neither can or will escape. *Endgame* by Beckett is, as the name suggests, in the new genre, which older theory and practice can hardly admit or accommodate.*

Nietzsche had said that only the artists dare to show us the human being as he is. A study of the art of portrait, as opposed to realistic painting or slick photography, will show. For instance, Rembrandt's portraits. Or Rouault's. This is no less true of landscapes, such as those of Van Gogh. Nearer home some of the doodles and paintings of Rabindranath Tagore qualify for that dubious eminence. •

What do we make of all this? What should be our attitude towards these men and the movement? Existentialism obviously reflects the contemporary sickness of the spirit, a shipwreck or crisis in conscience. It will not do to pooh-pooh it. Backwash of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and of Dictatorship, when torture was a daily reality, the contradictions of our age—as revealed in such institutions as Technique, Church and Party—have stimulated it into existence. In its own way it is a call to reality and a revolt against all that is phony, and putrid, when "each man experiences his very existence as guilt and betrayal, and as a possibility of death: nothing more". Demetrios Capatanakis catches the modern accent when he says, "Nothingness might save or destroy those who face it, but those who ignore it are condemned to unreality. They cannot pretend to a real life, which if it is full of risks, is also full of real promise." Unfortunately, its very protest or pretense has become something of a permanent stance and a stunt, to be valued for

* Elsewhere he says: "There is nothing to express, nothing which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with no obligation to express." The only question is: why write at all?

itself, in which the forlornness and despair of existence are strangely transmuted into a kind of self-satisfied, rather cosy defiance of the universe. In other words, among these knight-errants of the Absurd the line between the hero and the cad is sometimes quite thin, and its re-assertion of the age-old question: "Know thy self" shows little discrimination as to which self to choose or be. According to Kierkegaard, unconsciously echoing Tertullian, the Incarnation is Absurd. It is perhaps not without significance that Miguel Unamuno, a Spaniard, has derived a new Quixotic philosophy from Kierkegaard. The existentialists do not always distinguish between "I believe" and "I feel". *Je ne sais pas ce que je crois*. Many things pass for existentialism which are really a matter of mood and an unbalanced inwardness. Suffering tells us that we exist, says Unamuno. But the suffering, such as it is—though one suspects it is often hugely exaggerated—leads to neither charity nor understanding. If not morbid or theatrical, it certainly seems overdone, almost pathological, the sign of a sick ego in a sick society. Also in its insistence on the role of the lonely individual existentialism is in danger of forgetting that true selfhood need not be perennially opposed to social realities and relations. This is recognised by Jaspers but not by the Sartrean school which speaks the language of intellectual Ishmaels.

Atheistic existentialism in particular is the product of a poor psychology, of a dying animal. Not that it is not subtle, but is it deep enough? Sometimes it comes close to being a tremendous trifle, a merciless squeezing of the shrunken and splintered ego by monsters of littleness. Its much-advertised "decision" ignores or shows little or no consideration of loving-kindness according to which service to God (and humanity) is perfect freedom. The existentialists have obviously never heard of, and perhaps will not believe in, non-attached activity. Both its understanding of the will and the nature of activity look utterly unspiritual. It is no wonder that even the tolerant Popes of today have condemned it as a heresy. To will what He wills is the supreme secret, says the mystic. This is a wisdom, more than that it is an

experience—which the existentialist does not know and cannot know. For, according to the existentialist *shastra*, 'He' is dead or does not exist. Can man survive the death of God? And what men! Ghouls and goblins flitting about the dark, squeaking and squealing their way to *Le Néant* of their own choice. Liberty, what crimes are not committed in thy name! Atheistic existentialism describes in detail the consequences of a life without roots, of a civilization without conviction and convention. Excellent in opposition, it is a test for all time-honoured assumptions, thought and conduct. Sleazy solutions wither at its touch. These men have looked at the very bottom of the modern psyche and the Abyss has looked back into them. Unhappy men, they have "chosen despair". *

But by itself existentialism reveals no certain moral norm or content, no mark for the waylost mariner on life's tossing waves. Judged by the highest standards it appears superficial, even dangerous. For instance, while it was possible for Heidegger, with whatever equivocation, to be pro-Nazi—"Only the Fuehrer himself is the German Reality"—for Sartre it was clearly an impossibility. His one brief hour of heroism, during the Resistance, is unforgettable. "We were never more free than during the German Occupation. We had lost all our rights, beginning with the right to talk. Every day we were insulted to our face and had to take it in silence. Under one pretext or another, as workers, Jews or political prisoners, we were deported *en masse*. Everywhere, on billboards, in the newspapers, on the screen, we encountered the revolting and insipid picture of ourselves that our oppressors wanted us to accept. And, because of all this, we were free. . . . The circumstances, as they often were, finally made it possible for us to live, without pretence or false shame, the hectic and impossible existence that is known as the lot of men." But in post-Occupation France the Sartrean defiance or decision has not been of much help.

A by-product of the contemporary crisis in history and

* " . . . And practise nausea in a mirror but the nausea is real notwithstanding."

conscience, existentialism represents bitter, bewildered honesty along with much meretricious posturing. I want honesty, had been Kierkegaard's last words. But was he not all his life an actor? An exposé as well as a rationalization of the Irrational Man, existentialism is an intrepid, if undisciplined exploration of the dreary depths from which most men turn their eyes away. In the existentialist universe we are never alive unless we shiver, certainly never more alive than when we shudder before the Unknown, be it God, Death or the Other, the hell of separative consciousness. An experience and experiment in living without God it is at the same time a waiting for God and Godot.

Opponents of the Highest they have come
Out of their world of soulless thought and power
To serve by camouflaging the cosmic scheme
Night is their refuge and strategic base

None can reach Heaven who has not passed through Hell. Here is Hell up-to-date, a Dantesque journey *à rebours*. But with no Dante in view, none to write the last canto, of *Paradiso*. The trouble with most existentialists is that they prefer to be in Hell, not for a season but always. Rewriting the story of the Fall without Redemption, they choose to be their own sweating selves. Paradoxically, their real, if unintended, service and meaning may lie in a return, albeit an unconventional return, to the Varieties of Religious Experience. As Pierre Rousselet has said, "The human soul has not found itself; and this kind of absence itself from itself is the essential sign signifying the state of being on the way, tending towards God." Out of Nothing All, out of the Void Compassion. When and how it will happen is anybody's guess. But when it does, the becoming of Truth, *das Geschehen der Wahrheit*, pose will be unnecessary and blight turn into benediction. The descent into the pit, Kant had suggested, was the only path to apotheosis. But like most philosophers without faith he had no praxis. Those who, while remaining true to *yugadharma*, needs of the hour, can supply that faith will be renewing mankind's oldest tradition, and

heal the gaping wounds of self-consciousness. Analysis apart, this will mean a going back to more than the foundation of metaphysics. It will be, rather, a "conversion to the intrinsic", to a pure glory of being, "the hidden being which reveals itself". Is yoga, one wonders, the answer? As the mediaeval Indian mystic, Saraha, knew so well :

The fair tree of thought knows no duality,
Spreads through the triple world.
It bears the flowers and fruit of compassion,
And its name is service to others.

Or, as the poet-philosopher Asanga has it : The Bodhi-sattva's love for fellow-creatures is the supreme mystery of the world, or that it is not, since the other and self are for him identical, since *all* mankind to him are himself. Not mankind alone. The sentiment has its echo in the academic jargon of modern psychology too. Says Maslow : "The inner-outer split, between self and all else, gets fuzzy and much less sharp, and they are seen to be permeable to each other at the highest levels of personality development." If and when these higher levels of personality development become available much of the agonised existential gestures and strategies will not be needed. Then existentialism will cease to exist. *Is the shipwreck, then, a harvest, does tempest carry the grain for thee?* Agonies are one of my changes of garment. The other is—ecstasy. *Yahklésah so bodhi, Yah samsārah tat nirvānam.*

EYELESS IN GAZA

A visit to Aldous Huxley—climax of all my wanderings in the west coast. Like a good many other things this too I owed to my good doctor friend, whose enthusiasm easily put mine to shame. "After coming all this way how can you think of going back to India without seeing Aldous Huxley?" The question, as he put it, with a rising rhetoric in which appeal and persuasion were equally mixed, seemed unanswerable. He took the lead and rang up Mr. Huxley, five hundred miles away. Across the distance the voice sounded so English and reassuring. Even the fact that I had committed the indiscretion of writing a small book on him did not—as I had feared it well might—make him try to get rid of me at once. On the contrary he seemed pleasantly surprised and, on his own, gave elaborate directions how to reach his home in the Hollywood hills.

This of course did not prevent us from being waylost more than once. At we reached the house at the end of a steep serpentine road, the city of Los Angeles lay at our feet. The view was spectacular but the immediate prospects were almost frightful. There was something unspeakably eerie about the place. It might well have been haunted. There was not a soul to be seen anywhere. A strange disquiet fell over our spirits. Even the doctor felt a little uneasy as he viewed the lonely helicopter whirr against the horizon. It might have been a vampire or an albatross.

The house looked deserted. Later we learnt that he was occupying but one of its rooms. His own house, about a mile off, had been burnt down in an accident. The only things to escape had been his wife's Stradivarius and the manuscript

of his latest novel, *Island*. He did not plan to build another. It is curious, he told us later, to be without any possession, without any concrete, tangible links with the past.

As we rang the bell the face of a little child peered through an upper window. "Your name, please?" it said. A minute later the same impersonal, polite voice announced that Mr. Huxley would be down in a minute. We held our breath. A minute later the front door opened and there, in the semi-darkness, stood Mr. Huxley himself. We were familiar with his picture. But was this the face? Tall, thin, with gray-ing hairs and a slight stoop, one eye almost blind, even the gait was far from steady. It was like talking to the shades. But what a gentle shade, exceedingly polite, and how different from his sharp, corruscating writings! But somehow it was all very sad, the place, the person, everything. Was it some mysterious penance he was undergoing or had inflicted upon himself? And for what? Mescaline and LSD? The agony and the ecstasy? We did not know. But we all felt an air of withdrawal about him. He did not seem to belong to this world and if by any chance he had glided in or out of the window we at least would not have been surprised. But speculations can wait.

He had recently been to India. We were curious to know how he had found the country and the people this time. During his earlier visit, nearly three decades back, the jesting Pilate had, among other things, written: "If I were an Indian millionaire, I would leave all my money for the endowment of an Atheistic Mission." Years later, in 1945, we find him writing, to a friend in South India, a different note: "When and if the world is at peace again I should like to return to India and see it with other eyes than those with which I saw it when I was there last." India cannot be said to be at peace now but the Tagore Centenary Committee had invited him and he had gone for a short visit. This gave us an easy opening.

"How was your visit to India?"

"Well, we had three days of the Centenary. Then I flew to Madras, to see Krishnamurti."

"Did you visit places, like Banaras, Agra, Calcutta?"

"No, not this time. The visit was too short for that."

"Did you notice any change in India this time?"

"Naturally there's change. My goodness! I don't know. There is the demographical problem to begin with. An enormous headache."

"Did you meet Pandit Nehru?"

"No, he was in Mexico then. But I met my old friend, Dewan Chaman Lal. Also Krishna Kripalani, of the Akademi. Remarkable person." After a pause he added, as if he had remembered something: "In the Centenary itself listening to speaker after speaker telling us of Tagore's works being translated into the various regional languages gave us a new angle at the problem of languages in India. Outside, we do not sufficiently realise the problem of communication as it exists in India. By the way, in what language do you teach in the schools and colleges these days?" he asked us.

We explained briefly. How some were eagerly trying to replace English by the regional languages and had even set a deadline for the purpose. But there were others who wanted to retain English till such time when suitable text books and other material became available in the regional languages. They also felt that even if, in the long run, English could not perhaps remain the language of instruction it would still be necessary to learn it and learn it well. There was no point, they felt, in throwing away an obvious advantage. But the picture was far from clear and government policy had veered from one to the other and back again.

"Well, it is profoundly useful, a sort of lingua franca. And I don't think the rest of the world is going to take the trouble of learning Hindi in a hurry," said Huxley with a smile.

"Are you writing anything now?" someone asked.

"Last winter I finished a long essay on Science and Literature."

That reminded. A few days back we had come across an advertisement which showed his *Art of Seeing* as children's book. "Did you know?" asked Mrs. M—, "that the *Art of*

Seeing is being advertised as a children's book? Is it the same book or have you written something new on the subject?"

"Children's book?" Mr. Huxley raised his hands in alarm and despair. "Can't think of it like that. No I have not written anything new. Not that I know of."

"Excuse me, how do you write? I mean, do you take notes, write out or—?"

(His books, particularly *Point Counter Point*, hint at the manner of his composition or so people have thought.)

"Type and correct," he said briefly.

"And do you read these yourself or—?" (We had heard of his failing eyesight.)

"Yes, I read myself."

"Talking of books, which did you enjoy writing most?"

"I don't know really. I think I like *Time Must Have A Stop*."

"Which gave you the most trouble?"

"Well, I can't say. They all do. I constantly revise. All my thoughts are second thoughts."

"Among the many authors that you have read or met has anyone influenced you?"

"Influence? Well, I can't think of anyone in particular. Dostoevsky. Tolstoy. At one time I used to read a good deal of French novels. Now too little, I am afraid. Not enough of contemporary writers either. Not as much as I would like to, anyway."

We slowly moved up to deeper waters. Beginning with pacifism, which he has consistently championed.

"You have often written in favour of the pacifist position. But can it be anything more than an individual action or attitude? Or do you really think that any large group or nation will accept pacifism as the right way to solve difficulties and differences?"

"No, I don't think so," he admitted simply. "I did think once. But I don't think so now." It is difficult to convey the pathos of these three short sentences. "Infinitely greater men," the voice went on, "have tried. Gandhi did, but—."

He left the sentence unfinished.

"Do you think pacifism is ultimately related to some kind of mysticism?"

"I think so. Finally, yes. Don't you?"

"But then what happens to the *Gita*? Krishna does recommend fighting, even if the motives are far different from the usual motives," we parried.

"Well, it is a perpetual dilemma," said Mr. Huxley looking into the distance. His head seemed to droop. The thought seemed painful to him. We did not pursue the subject further.

We now turned to even more dangerous grounds, the use of drugs with which his name had been recently associated. The controversy was still raging and in some ways he stood at the centre of it.

"You once wrote about the possible use of drugs for purposes of political brain-washing. That was meant as a warning. How is it that you now support the use of drugs and other artificial aids for providing spiritual experiences? How do you justify this in terms of ends and means?"

"Well, in *Brave New World* the drug is the plank of scientific dictatorships. Today pharmacology is pouring out floods of controlled psychic energisers. These did not exist earlier and can lead to enormous alterations of consciousness, without being harmful. LSD, Mescaline, these are very extraordinary. There is no indication (he repeated) that their use is dangerous or that the aftereffects are harmful. And then there is the whole question of the significance of the experience that they induce. You know how William James had come to its defence? But James had used only some kind of laughing gas. Later, in his *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson had come to James' rescue, but he had also suggested that the drugs must not be thought of as the cause but the condition for the altered experience. You know Leary?" he turned towards us.

Luckily we did. He was the Harvard professor who had recently 'resigned' (you know what that means in academic circles) to carry on his research into the drugs. It was all in

the papers. There was nothing extraordinary about our knowledge.

"But why did he choose Mexico?" asked Sasanka, the doctor.

"Because it is convenient and they have a place where they can work."

"Have they asked you to join them?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever tried these drugs yourself?" asked Mrs M—. (Of course he had. That is where the trouble lay.)

"Yes, Mescaline and LSD. I have not tried the mushroom. The mushroom, you know, is mentioned by the Spaniards. But they thought that the cult had died out. It had not. One of J. P. Morgan's men, himself a banker, was passionately interested in these. He made serious inquiries, went to the local medicine men and women. Then Professor Heims, of Paris, an eminent micologist, got interested. Then on things began to happen." It seemed to do him good to say all this.

"On the basis of your experience would you say that the mind can directly control matter?" we asked him.

"Well, the mind is virtually omniscient. The relationship of mind and body has bothered people in every age. One influences the other, obviously. Today convertibility is coming to be accepted more and more. We are beginning to talk in terms of one set or the other. Now, for the first time, it seems we can understand these things a little better. Ninety per cent of our knowledge is recent acquisition. Mescaline is only fifteen years old, LSD even less."

"What happened to you after you had taken these drugs?"

"Very extraordinary," pat came the reply. "An enormous amount of aesthetic experience—sometimes transfiguration—pre- or fully mystical states I should say. A total solidarity with all creatures."

"But isn't all this sensation a little selfish?" put in the critical, worried Mrs. M—.

"No," said Huxley at once. If he felt offended he did not allow us to see that. "It is equally selfish to fall in love while so many remain untouched by that emotion." It was a perfect *tu quoque*. After a pause he added, more gently, elaborating on what he had said earlier. "As Meister Eckhart says, what the mystic takes in by his contemplation he gives out in love. That, you know, is the difference between the Hinayana and the Mahayana, between the Arhat and the Bodhisattva. There is no reason why these 'sensations' or experiences should be at all selfish. They can be, indeed often are, the very opposite."

"What do you think of the threat of an atomic war?" asked Mrs. M—, perhaps in an effort to change the topic. In any case, the question was bound to come up, sooner or later.

"I—just—don't—know," said Mr. Huxley very, very slowly. It sounded like the voice of a tired child. Then the old voice came back and continued. "I don't think either party wants to blow the other off. But, you see, it all depends on the further question: Can we escape from the prison of our culture, which is nationalistic and materialistic?"

"What would you say is the real trouble with the 'prisoner'?"

"One of the aims of all political and military propaganda has always been to de-humanize the enemy first. That makes it so much easier to deal with them afterwards. The denial of personality is always a danger and an error. In our world it exists in great abundance."

"Swami Vivekananda used to speak of the disease of civilization."

"So have others," said Mr. Huxley, not fully impressed. "But civilization also prevents us from turning into baboons. Paradox and ambivalence."

"You have, more than once, quoted Marett's definition of civilization, that the only progress is a progress in charity. Do you still hold to that view?"

"Indeed, I do."

"What would you say about today's culture from that point of view?"

"We come back to the old point. We are all beneficiaries and victims of our culture. As it happens, it is a culture of non-charity, organised non-charity and (after a pause) of organised insanity." Nothing could be more precise.

"Cannot education do something about it?" inquired Sasanka, the doctor. "I personally think that the British system of education, with its discipline and sense of respect is much better than the permissive system that obtains here in this country. What do you say to that?"

"Yes, the Convention of Discipline has somehow disappeared," answered Mr. Huxley in a very quiet tone. "How do we get it back? Does anybody know?" asked Mr. Huxley no one in particular.

"What do you think of the Teenagers here?" asked Mrs. M—, who, like every mother, had problems of her own.

"It is an extraordinary phenomenon," agreed Mr. Huxley. "This Gang Business. In Los Angeles, you know, they are terribly worried about this."

I told him how a few days back, in downtown San Francisco, a friend had pointed out to me a self-conscious Negro youth swaggering along the sidewalk. He was none other than the Director of Hell's Angels, I was told. A Very Important Person, my friend had tried to impress that fact upon me.

"I have no doubt about that," Mr. Huxley's voice was duly deferential to the boss of the Baudelairean brotherhood. "It puzzles me," he went on. "One fairly obvious reason is of course that we are now getting adolescents who have nothing to do. Extremely vigorous youth, with nothing to do, nothing worthwhile. Recently there had been an interesting and enlightening article in the *Nation* on 'Labour Shudders at the Thought of Leisure.' An enormous problem, really, this problem of unemployment, of unemployed youth. They legislate about Child Labour, but they have done nothing about Child Idleness."

"On top of it they are all the time exposed to temptations and other artificial stimulus," we contributed to the conversation.

"Of course that makes it even worse. The Lord's Prayer says, Lead us not unto temptation. But Madison Avenue speaks a different gospel, based on a clear negation of the Lord's Prayer. I also think," added Mr. Huxley, "living in large cities may have something to do with this. Growing up totally out of touch with Nature. I cannot help feeling that a growing fruit tree, or living in the midst of fruits and flowers, the birds and the beasts, has a certain civilizing influence on the child. At least there would be less neurosis."

"But what has a tree or looking at a cow to do with juvenile delinquency?" snapped Mrs. M—, apparently not a Nature-enthusiast.

"Perhaps not directly," Mr. Huxley granted generously. "But there are links, there may be links. Let me give you an example. In England the whole thing started with spraying the countryside. The insects were destroyed no doubt, but so were the caterpillars. In the end there were no butterflies to be seen anywhere. I once used to collect them. Now I can't even find them. Also, the cuckoo and the nightingale can no longer be heard — the raw material of poetry is gone." There was no bitterness or personal regret in all this. He was just stating a fact, or a statistics.

"The answer, I would say, lies in an improved weed-killer," was the quick suggestion made by the scientifically-minded Mrs. M—

"I wish we could get one," answered Mr. Huxley dryly. "I must say I regret it. I am not exactly a Wordsworthian, but I am glad that I was brought up in the country."

"Everywhere things seem to wither. Are we coming to an end?" asked a gloomy voice, which I recognised as mine. "What would you say is man's greatest danger today?"

"Greatest danger?" He fell into a muse. "Ignorance, I think. But obviously the most immediate dangers are two: the increasing possibilities of atomic warfare and, secondly, the population explosion. Take this city. It should be a very happy city. Is it? Already there are two hundred thousand unemployed in the city. In order to catch up a million new jobs have to be found or created. In the mean-

time, Automation will throw more out of their jobs. This in the richest country of the world. What are the underdeveloped countries going to do? The outlook seems increasingly depressing. I was in Rome a few months back. The FAO had invited scientists and others, including the religious heads, to a conference dedicated to fighting hunger all over the world. As we listened to the experts the picture looked fearfully grave."

"What is the way out?"

"I do not know what the way out may be," spoke the gentle shade. "Even if by some miracle we escape disaster, our numbers would double by the end of the century and touch seven billions, some experts tell us. Is there any likelihood of a superior standard of living for all this great number?"

"Cannot science come to the rescue?" asked the doctor. "Some new and better method of birth control, for instance?"

"Exactly. It can and, to an extent, it has. But this is still expensive and not popular. How are you going to make people use these? And even if they do so, may be the 21st century will be a little less awful. But this would still mean fifty years of extreme difficulty and wretchedness. The Chinese, for instance, will soon touch 1,000 million. By 1980. This, as you can imagine, will have other repercussions too. Their recent behaviour on the Indian border isn't exactly reassuring."

"It's a portent," added a gloomy voice. "The transformation of the old Chinese culture is one of the tragedies of today. In some ways it is far worse than what has taken place in Japan."

"Yes, wiping out three thousand years of culture. It is very, very extraordinary," Mr. Huxley seemed to be speaking to himself.

We referred to Toynbee, who, in a recent lecture at Stanford, had stressed the same problem.

"Did he?" inquired Mr. Huxley, obviously pleased. "You know, in the earlier volumes of the *Study of History* he seemed to ignore the issue completely. But the problem of

population is obviously important. It is one of those cases where, as Marx said, a sufficient change in quantity is able to produce a change in quality. The problems of power-politics are perhaps insoluble, but we could hope to tackle the problems of ecology, as the FAO has been trying to do."

"In *The Perennial Philosophy* you have suggested that the problem of power can be solved only by the saint. Do you still think so?"

"It remains the only solution. But now of course our new sources of power are changing the pattern of living, even of our accepted democratic conventions. Atlee started the work on Atomic Bombs without consulting the Cabinet. This is a good, long way from parliamentary government. Just as the form of Monarchy might remain while the spirit is gone, so also one day the forms of Democracy might remain but the spirit will be gone."

"President Truman had sent the marine to Korea without consulting the Congress. But in this case the end had justified the means," cut in Sasanka.

"Well, that is the major problem, alas. Lord Salisbury used to say that his policy was one of masterly inactivity. How happy we would all be if this were really so!" and Mr Huxley with a sad, tolerant, troubled smile.

After a moment's pause we came up with a more than metaphysical question.

"Would you say life has a purpose?"

This was clearly unexpected. Mr Huxley almost started. He stirred a little. He hesitated. Then, a faraway look in his eyes, as if from a distance, the voice spoke. "Well—I mean—so far we are concerned, it has the purpose we choose to give it. But really, it is an, an unanswerable question. As Eckhart said, if you ask me to define life, I don't know what it is. I live because I live. The universe means what it means, that is what I make it to mean. But nevertheless, nevertheless it remains a Mystery." The voice came to a halt.

"Would you say that this sense of Mystery is essentially individual? Or can it be institutionalised?" I asked.

"No. Most institutions are, I would say, devices to hide or keep away the Mystery. Institutions are necessary but, as history shows, they can be fatal too."

"The Buddha used to insist that we should rely on ourselves for our salvation. He also spoke of the Law of Consequences. Would you accept that Law as valid?"

"Perfectly valid. The only trouble is, how are we going to see the consequences, I mean foresee?"

"You have often said that man is a teachable animal. Don't you think that one day he might learn to live in harmony with the Nature of Things and live in peace with himself and others?"

"Well, I hope so. He had better. You know," said Mr. Huxley with the hint of a smile, "what Carlyle had told the American lady when she said that she accepted the universe? She had better!"

But, in spite of the smile, he looked, we thought, a little tired. We had already used nearly two hours of his time and wanted to leave. But Mr. Huxley insisted on taking us for a walk to the Hollywood lakes. It was a dirt road that winded across the lonely hillside, rather unexpected amidst the glamour capital of the world. The Americans had lost the use of their legs, he said. For himself, he took long walks in the afternoon. What strange thoughts must be passing through his mind during these solitary to and fro! He pointed out the plants and the parasites ("like the badly dyed hair of an old lady") by the wayside, not as a botanist might but as one who genuinely loved these things. "The birds are so happy," he said, looking at some swallows that twittered in the sky.

Later he easily posed for the camera, if not with enthusiasm at least with resignation. But clouds were forming in the sky. ("Like Rajput painting.") It looked as if it might rain. We had a long drive ahead of us. As we were walking back someone pointed out a huge atene on the hills overlooking his house.

"What's that?"

"Radio. Now the Defence Department has taken it over.

They spy over us all the time," he added with a sudden humour. "Big Brother. When the bomb is dropped," here the voice also dropped, all passion spent, "they will say, The bomb has been dropped."

Was he sad at the prospect? Or did he look forward to it? Did he himself know? Does anyone?

IRA PROGOFF

PSYCHOLOGIST OF THE DEPTH

The last on my map, about to be folded, of an American tour was Ira Progoff, psychologist of the 'depth'. At the Crescent Moon Ranch Mrs. Lois Duncan, who knew him well, had suggested that we might meet. As I was about to take off, she suddenly murmured, "If it is destined you will meet." At the time I had not taken it too seriously. In any case, you can't argue with Fate. Or can you?

I knew him by reputation and through his books : *Jung's Psychology and its Social Meaning*, *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology* and *Depth Psychology and Modern Man*. Dr. Progoff was both author and practising psychiatrist, one of the top. But his handling of cases and the cure he offered differed considerably from the ways of the tribe. He saw man, to quote him, in terms of "what his nature requires him to become", as a unity ever in process of growth. He still thought in terms of wholeness, of a total inclusive pattern, and did not deny the divine its share in the paradox of man. Even if he did not spell out 'spiritual' in so many letters, or get lost in a metaphysical mist, he seemed friendly to ideas and ideals, and "the need of the modern person to re-establish a relationship with the creative sources of life". He was also not unfamiliar with yoga. In other words, sensitive to the entire spectrum, which is more than what can be said about the presiding deities, or ogres, of the psychiatrist pantheon. Decidedly *simpatico*.

For my part I was eager to meet him. A live psychiatrist held a kind of fatal fascination. But my days in

New York were numbered, less than a week. Two days before leaving the States I was taking an inventory of all the vast undone. What a lot of missed and messed opportunities stared at me from the Engagement Pad! With an uneasy conscience I had to admit to myself that I had done nothing about seeing the doctor. At the time I was sitting in a Broadway office with a friend, Mr. Sengupta. He asked me my plans for the day. I had a free afternoon, I told him. It was then that the idea came — that I should ring up Dr. Progoff. I knew enough of New York to know that a practising psychiatrist could not be had for the asking. However, on an impulse, I rang him up. "If it is destined, you will meet him." Mrs. Duncan's words came back to me.

I had tempted destiny and was waiting for results.

What's in a voice? Much. I had won in the first rounds. The voice at the other end could be easily described as friendly, even enthusiastic. Yes, he had heard about me from the Duncans. How long was I going to stay in New York? I told him that I would be leaving the day after next. "Could I see you sometime tomorrow?" I added. "I am sorry," said the voice, "I shall be going out of town for the day." Destiny had spoken. I had lost the game. But wait! Just then, when I had given up hoping, once again the doctor's voice came over the wire. "Look here," it said. "I shall be free for an hour today at three in the afternoon. An interview has been cancelled at the last hour, just now. Can you come?"

As easy as that.

A little before three we presented ourselves in front of his 16th Street apartment. There were rituals to be undergone. I doubt if I could have made it without Mr. Sengupta, who guided me through the portals, beyond the F. B. I-ish janitor who eyed me with open suspicion. In the end, we were out of his reach and on our way to the seventh floor, which, you will agree, is a good place for a psychiatrist's office.

It was a neat little room. A sofa on one side. On the other a small table, with a typewriter, a telephone, book

shelves with familiar and unfamiliar titles. Some toys, including, for some unknown reason, an Indian baby elephant. The only object to make you uneasy was a tape-recorder, happily silent.

Knock and it shall open. It was opened by the young secretary, a tall friendly creature. Not only intelligent but more than that, understanding, with that perfect charm that educated women everywhere have, whether they have been to the university or not. Miss Lynn Krug had been, however. After taking a course in physics she was now majoring in anthropology. No, she did not go in for psychology for fear that it might make her too clinical. She was then writing a term paper on "The Concept of Time among the Hopi Indians, the Jews and the Hindus". "Would you care to read it sometime and give me the benefit of your opinion?" she asked me with an earnestness that university teachers find so attractive and embarrassing. I pleaded ignorance and promised to find a better mentor for her. We were all rather relaxed, when — straight from attending a 'case' (we had a glimpse of the 'case', and the glimpse was enough)—Dr. Progoff walked in. In his middle fifties, gentle if not shy, he had very attractive manners and at once put us at our ease. If this was a psychiatrist, psychiatry did not seem so dreadful after all.

"Have you been to India?" we asked him. There was no special reason for asking *that* question. But somehow we did. It came.

"Alas, no," answered the doctor. "But India calls me in many ways. It is always good to know other people, other cultures, other ways of life and thought. It gives an additional dimension to one's being. India above all."

"But India can hardly be 'another country' to you, Dr. Progoff," we protested. On his part he seemed surprised that his books were known in India.

"Dr. Progoff," we continued, "as a practising psychiatrist which insight of modern psychology appears to you to be the most valuable?"

"Well, for me," he said after a pause, "the insight that seems most important is the fact that the experience of a person at a particular point of time isn't confined to that point alone, but stretches before and after. It has many dimensions. That is important. Really, we don't start just where we are, we have a long history somewhere, as Emerson said, writing about Whitman. But then Emerson was one of the few who knew something about an earlier tradition and knowledge. As you know, this was largely lost in the 19th century and now we have to re-discover it — the depths and dimensions within us."

"What precisely is meant by depth psychology?" asked Sengupta, with an innocence that was most becoming in a Burra Sahib.

"What precisely is depth psychology?" Dr. Progoff repeated the question. "I would say that by means of images, dreams and symbols depth psychology makes available to us a dimension of the past, a lost forgotten language. That is, so far as the modern man or the western psyche is concerned, depth psychology provides a scientific means of communication and connection. For instance, the various urges and impulses that a person feels from time to time without always knowing why. With the help of depth psychology he can know where these come from or where they lead to, to what hidden depths of the being. With a little training one may even know how to use these for one's future development. For in psychology it is not enough to be oriented towards one's past—that was the mistake with analysis—but towards the future too. But after all," added Dr. Progoff, "what we call depth psychology is just a form and a phrase. Its significance in the history of Western thought, as I see it, is that with its help western man may work his way back to the forgotten depths of the psyche. If there had never been a break or scission such as the Age of Reason involved, there would not perhaps have been any need for this kind of psychology. But, mind you, this is not to equate depth psychology with religious psychology—the older religious psychology. Mediaeval culture may have had a

symbolic richness that we have lost. But it is very different from ours. Today we have arrived at a point of view and a technique which mediaeval Christianity at no time possessed. In some respects I would say the mediaeval mind tended to be too literal, it took a horizontal view of things so to speak. This was so even with the greatest. For instance, when 'How many angels can be balanced on a pinpoint?' becomes a genuine problem for the theologians, you know something has been missed or gone wrong. It is the same with their Angelology. There is something behind it, but it has become too literal and is no longer a part of real knowledge or experience, I would say."

"Isn't this true of their Demonology too?" we asked.

"Yes. Demons and Angels, they are after all cousins. In earlier ages things were looked upon horizontally, without any organised scientific knowledge. The sanction of dogmas was all that was needed. Very often that was all that was needed to kill knowledge, or whatever of the knowledge had survived."

"I don't think either Jacques Maritain or Etienne Gilson would accept that," I objected mildly. "But let's leave the mediaeval mind and come to the modern. Dr. Progoff, you know in recent years there has been an enormous increase in mental cases and other forms of neurosis. Is this a sign of degeneration or does this point to a crisis of awareness and selfhood?"

"Yah," was all that he said in the purest New Yorkese. The monosyllable seemed to help him collect his thoughts, for he soon continued. "This is a large historical question. In fact, wherever an industrial order has come into being there has been this increase of tension and difficulty. Also, don't forget, we now have terms or categories to describe signs of this imbalance. A long list of new terms describing these imbalances. Hence we see more of these diseases too. It is well-known that every time a symptom or a disease is better described or understood we have a rash of the same. Because we know more of it, we see more of it too. But there is also something basic in this—a transition from one culture to

another, that is from one vision of truth to another, briefly from agriculture to industry, from village to town, from a unified to a fragmented view of life. Naturally the effect of all this has been a prolonged confusion. This is the price that we have to pay. Wouldn't you say," asked Dr. Progoff turning towards me, "that at any point crisis is the road to selfhood?"

"Yes," I could not deny that. "The distresses of choice are our only chance to be blessed," I added wisely, quoting, or misquoting, someone.

"That's it and so it has always been. In our historical period this has created, as we can see, enormous problems and difficulties. Nor is it confined to Europe and the West alone. It exists throughout the world, maybe not in the same measure. Take Japan or even Africa. I am told that something similar is going on in your own country too."

"Indeed. I would say the new generation in India has a civil war with itself. It is not merely the European mind that is divided against itself. We all are. The 'educated' Indian has often been described as a schizophrenic. It is an interesting study, sad but neglected."

"I know what you mean," said Dr. Progoff. "For, growth is rarely a happy process. But in the process the depths of the psyche get stirred and something comes out, something valuable, which we would not otherwise have or use. I am not particularly worried about tension. I think it is a good thing, or can be. Everything depends on what happens to the tension, that is what we do with it. Very often instead of helping our development it helps our own destruction, as is happening today."

"Then might we not say," we asked, "that to be adjusted, or well adjusted to a society like ours, is itself an error and a deprivation?"

"Not only an error but to be in error," agreed Dr. Progoff with a *toutcompréhensif* smile.

"Dr. Progoff, many believe sex to be at the bottom of this tension or trouble. What do you say? In a man's total life which is more important—sex or a sense of significance?"

"Well, I would say sex is part of the whole pattern of life. And when you come to think of it, sex is not just sex. It is a category that becomes important only in a certain context, time or culture. In most early cultures it remained part of a social, even religious ritual. There was no problem, at least not to the extent that it is at the present moment of history. It is only when society becomes complex and fragmented, when there is more leisure, when values break down, and there is no single, governing image or pattern and every impulse and activity demands autonomy that sex acquires this strange, distorted importance such as we see nowadays. This is the main reason for all our pains and problems. This is natural and yet not natural."

"How or why has this happened?"

"In other words, why had the older cultures this overall pattern and we don't? Because it made life possible."

"And today, by implication, we have made life impossible?"

"Yes, if you like to put it like that. Isn't that the simple truth, after all? This is the first time in history when we have the power, the ability, perhaps even the desire to wipe out all life from the planet. Not a pleasant prospect, you will agree. Compare, rather contrast the Hindu stages of life. Even Shakespeare seems to imply something like that in his picture of the seven ages of man, that there is an order or inter-relatedness in life. You ask, How will this pattern, or wholeness, come back? Well, that is what we are all after, I would say. It will come, but only by the hard way, I am afraid. At present there is no society or group with such a pattern. One day the like-minded might come together. There have been feeble attempts here and there, among artists and thinkers. But nothing definite. It has not crystallized yet."

"In the task of setting his house in order do you think a man can cure or understand himself best? Or is it better done by another?"

"Well, after all most of the older traditions did require another or second person, *guru* or spiritual preceptor, or the

Wise Old Man. Ultimately, no doubt, one does it oneself. The *guru* too, I believe, is not so much 'another person' as your Higher Self. Some creative artists, like Melville and Whitman, have done or tried to do all this alone, all by themselves. Tolstoy too tried to do the same, it was bitter and costly, and did not end happily "

"Does this call for solitude?"

"Yes, I would say so. But more than outer solitude it requires an inwardness that would remain unmoved even in society, even in the midst of activity. Aloneness is a way to Reality. All the old disciplines insist on that. But, generally speaking, there is in the human situation something like a dialogue relationship: I and Thou. It seems to me that the seed of Self is real in all of us, but it is a potentiality rather than an actuality. At best there are intimations, unsure, flimsy, fleeting. The task of the other person, I would say, is not so much to diagnose or to analyse, as to feel the seed, to awaken it. To communicate, bit by bit, the reality of it. It is easier to see it in another than in oneself. Hence the master-disciple relationship. In truth, there is neither master nor disciple, it is the same seed or the same Self in all. But I am getting too metaphysical and might soon get out of my depth, especially in the presence of a man from the East. What I mean to say is that what one sees is not merely the person as he is at the moment, what he has become for the present, but what he might be in future, the true nature or flowering of the seed. Self-understanding, one might say, is a dialogue with the future "

"Isn't it also an escape from time and all-made things? A dialogue with eternity?" I asked

"Yes, in a deeply mystical sense, yes," answered Dr. Progoff.

"But how is all this to be done? How will the seed flower?"

"Well, I can't use the Rorschach test very well. Nor have I much faith in perception tests and things like that. With the help of these tests you may perhaps get the past mapped out. But what about the future? In the end I

suppose, you have to rely on intuitive factors, such as sympathy, imagination and understanding. Science means knowing, it is also a method and a discipline. But here what we are after is an intangible, because it is a psychological knowledge. This cannot be done by any external computer machine."

"You seem to imply idealistic values. But is a psychiatrist allowed to have these values? By the way, what is your idea of a balanced life?"

"But why should the psychiatrist *not* be allowed to have a sense of values? I should say much depends on that, on what kind of values he has. Isn't a psychiatrist a man speaking to men? But of course it is always difficult to state one's sense of values so coldly as that. You see, one's values must somehow come from one's life, that is from within. You know for some time I have been working with the American Ministry. But this does not mean that I accept the dogmas or doctrines of any particular sect. For instance, if I speak to a church group in support of a conclusion, let us say in support of morality, my reasons for doing so may not be the same as the church's reasons for doing so. Individuals may arrive at a point of view without owing any allegiance to a particular group or doctrine. Does this involve subjectivity or relativity of values? I don't think so. In any case, with regard to individual life and growth there is hardly any other way. The ultimates of life are not objective measurable facts. They call for a different approach, because we are here dealing with a different order of facts. Let me give you an extreme example. Supposing Hitler had been my patient. Now I would have tried to find out the 'seed' in him, the seed from which his kind of megalomania and destructiveness had developed. It wouldn't have been easy, but I believe if one went deep enough one would find the same seed, or life-principle, in all, in all things and beings. This answers your last question. A harmonising in terms of growth and of the many dimensions of the personality would be my idea of a balanced life. Or does this sound too academic and general? You know what I mean."

"I suppose I do. But let me ask you something else. Freud used to speak of the death instinct. What do you think of that? Has man no immortality instinct as well?"

"As regards your last question, yes. In the sense that Immortality is a will to extend life, the organism and the personality. But the word or idea has acquired all kinds of metaphysical overtones. Sometimes the question arises if it is the immortality of a particular physical body or being, or, as in some religious systems, the persistence of the psyche or the psychic factor. The details of the doctrine may differ, but there is something basic or analogous about the experience. And of course in order to be true, it must be more than a theory or a doctrine. An experience. As regards Freud and the death instinct, death is inherent or implied in the pleasure principle, which is all that Freud knew or seemed to care for. Now in all forms of pleasure, there must be the limitation of time, by time. For what is pleasure but gratification in time? That is, it suffers from momentariness. Now if you put all your stress on what is momentary you naturally cannot escape from the conclusion that the pleasure will end, that is die. There is nothing wrong with pleasure. It is a fact of our vital being. But I like to believe, as you meant when you spoke of a dialogue with eternity, that there can also be a pleasure in the timeless, of the timeless, such as Vedantic psychology has always held. 'By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy.' Will you please repeat that Sanskrit phrase? . . . Ah, yes. That is possible. The people who talked of these things knew what they were talking about. The ideal was also a realisable fact, at least for them it was. In Oriental thought or in mystical writings like *The Cloud of Unknowing* or in Meister Eckhart we come across similar ideas, expressions and experiences. Unfortunately, this is difficult for the average Westerner, especially today. It is difficult for him to change his way of thinking and place it in the mystical context. The very suggestion frightens him and rouses all his rational fury. Here, then, is the problem: How to actualise, effectuate or communicate this change and the need for it? That is the problem. For you cannot com-

municate these truths by voting or by talking, as they are trying to do it in the U. N., for instance. And advertisement, or propaganda, is of course just helpless. It can manipulate the surfaces of our being but is defenceless against the depths. The change must come from within and we must desire it first."

"Talking of Freud, is civilization a cause and another name for instinctual dissatisfaction? Or can instincts be sublimated?"

"In terms of what Freud thought about instincts the conclusion is inevitable. Freud thought of instincts in purely animal terms, confined to man's lower nature. The conflict which is here implied between the psyche and society is part of 19th-century romanticism. None of the modern thinkers think that way. Not even the most important of ancient thinkers. In depth psychology, in Plato, in Aristotle, in Jung, man's instincts are looked upon as social and capable of adaptation. They are meaningful and part of a wider pattern. It is the business of life and education to help the pattern and not to break it. There is no culture without sublimation."

"Then would you say that the work of an agency like the U. N. or the school in a community is mainly psychological?"

"Yes, of course. Ultimately, yes. I was interested in reading an excerpt in *World Today* about someone very popular at present in India. What's the name? I forget. I must get my Indian names straight. The man, Gandhi's successor, who walks about the countryside, collecting and giving away free land to the peasantry. Yes, Vinoba Bhave. He is reported to have said somewhere that today politics and religion are both out of date. The things that matter today are science and spirituality. Now, that's very true. I doubt if Gandhi would have said that. Religion and politics are things to argue about and this is what happens most of the time in the U. N.—argument, endless argument."

"To which the Indian contribution *à la* Krishna Menon is often not negligible," added my friend who had often heard that fallen fire-eater at Security Council debates

"Oh yes," replied the doctor with a ready smile: "Indians are not poor in polemics. Goodness, no. Compounded with an English education the result can be astounding. But to go back. The problem for us is—how can we meet the real task of understanding and communication, that is, how are we to draw the level of our dialogue to a more fundamental awareness than the political position of a party or government or mere political expediency? Let me give you an example. American Aid is generally known to have failed. Why? The answer, which may not be palatable to the American people, is that our one criterion is money, which is a purely external measure. Because of this sometimes even Americans cannot communicate with each other, what to speak of others belonging to another culture, and with another set of values. A few can, but then they are not the people in power, anywhere. As our advertisers once put it: Diamonds are a girl's best friend. That may be so," added the doctor with a quasi-Buddhist smile, "but I am afraid it is true only of a certain kind of girl. To be truthful or effective we must reach or actualise a level of awareness where Reality is directly experienced. Those who can do that have a way of communicating, non-discursively, if you like."

Then after a slight pause he went on: "All positions of power are transitory and usually selfish. That is why it may be important one day to have an international body for the whole world. The U. N. itself cannot hold a permanent *status quo*. We need some kind of central Intelligence if the race is to go ahead. But in order to make this real we would first need a psychological change, a revolution in our ways of thinking and being. Are we ready?"

The answer was obvious and none too cheerful.

So I changed the topic. "What is the relation between religion and psychology and ethics?"

"Well, I can speak only from my own feelings about what psychology is or ought to be. Psychology, as I understand it, has to contribute in a tangible way to a personal religion. And by a person I of course mean one educated in the modern way and the modern world. That is our starting point. For

those who can accept or function within the older framework the problem does not exist. They can do without psychology. For me the great value of modern psychology is that it makes possible for us to have inner meaningful experiences apart from any doctrinal allegiance or adherence. In fact, I would say that psychology as we know it is a transitional phenomenon. It is there because we don't have what we ought to have. When you catch the fish you throw the net away. But, of course, I wouldn't like to be thrown out of my work," added the doctor with a light laugh.

There was no immediate fear of that, we readily reassured him. "In what way can depth psychology help in the integration of the personality?" we continued our query.

"Well, that is the whole question, I would say!" exclaimed the doctor. "You asked me to relax," he pointed an accusing finger at me, "but with such a question how can I do that? Well, again, by providing new ways, concepts and disciplines by which modern man can arrive at the awareness and use of his various dimensions or magnitudes, the lost traditional ways, depth psychology provides or tries to provide a path to Reality that meets the criteria of the modern man and the modern point of view."

This had the familiar Jungian ring. "But will this not involve metaphysics of some sort?"

"Yes, but what's wrong with that, seeing that it is inevitable? But today the old distinction between physics and metaphysics is fast disappearing. The more sophisticated physicists no longer make that distinction. Again, of course, everything depends, or will depend, on whether the modern man's experience is unitary or fragmentary."

"Did you know," I told him, "that in India the highest knowledge, or knowledge of the Self, used to be called *Ekavidyā*, the knowledge of the One or the knowledge that unites different aspects of self or reality?"

"No, I didn't. But I am not surprised to hear it."

"You must be familiar with yoga. What do you think of it? In what way can it help us in our present crisis?"

"Well, there I have questions to ask! No, I don't know

much of it, and my first question would be : How far has yoga, as we have come to know it, to do with a special culture complex ? and how far is it universal and modifiable ? I think we must find new ways of the spirit, new hypotheses and new practices, to get the old knowledge and technique. That is, we must translate them into our own terms, in terms of our present-day experience. Otherwise we shall be suffering from a kind of form fetish and be content to repeat rather than advance. The basic truth is no doubt one, but it must be renewable in modern terms, that is in other than the accustomed and accredited terms."

"Supposing we said that yoga is the archetype of depth psychology ?"

"I suppose you very well could. In fact, Jung did hint at a kind of alliance. Only, we would not like to be committed to all the paraphernalia or inessentials. Of course I speak as one who has not undergone any specific discipline and you should not give too much value to what I say. By the way," he added in a lighter vein, "did I tell you of the Indian lady who had gone to Jung for treatment ? Ah, now I have an Eastern psyche, thought Jung, who had never had an Indian patient so far. But at the end of the treatment he only said : 'Only an English schoolmistress !' You see, she was an emancipated woman, from Delhi or Bombay maybe, with all the problems of masculinity and modernization, more familiar with the modern West than with the ancient East."

"Don't we know the type ? Of such is the kingdom, the culture of our cities," said Sengupta with a tolerant smile.

"Do you believe in holiness ?" I continued. "And how do you relate it with your special discipline ?"

"Again, I am not an expert on the subject. But isn't holiness, as we understand it, another culture idea ? As a particular idea, or way of expression, belonging to a particular period or people, as a thing of the past, I do not think it is either available or even necessary to us today. That is, it has to be put over and re-defined. We have to renew and speak of it in new terms and in a new context. If by holiness you mean spiritual capacity, such as Meister Eckhart meant,

I accept it, though not, as I have said just now, in its old, familiar, traditional forms only. If there is to be holiness for us, it must be a new kind of holiness."

(Was the doctor an existentialist? Yes, "holist and existential".)

"Do you believe in other levels of awareness or consciousness? How does one reach these levels?"

"I do believe. But how does one reach these levels? I don't know. The difficulty, I would say, is that the reaching is really not to be attempted deliberately, in the sense of a mechanical know-how. I am afraid a good deal of yoga falls under this category, of following old principles and practices without full understanding of what is involved in the process. Of course a man has to make some effort, even continued effort, because of certain aboriginal inheritances and resistances in his being or make-up. Hence all these disciplines, these austerities or *tapasyā* as you may say. When the resistance has been got rid of, the effort also can stop."

"The yoga of no yoga, in fact."

"Precisely. This is so even in therapeutics. The real healing comes through a spiritual capacity in the patient to profit. It is not: Take this medicine, cure guaranteed. The way to achieve awareness is, I would say, through awareness itself."

"The Self is to be won through the Self," I added, quoting the *Gita*.

"Yes, one goes along the whole process. It is a kind of psychic evocation, *evocare*. . . ."

That, I told him, was the heart of the Aurobindian yoga too. And I quoted :

But for such vast spiritual change to be,
Out of the mystic cavern in man's heart
The heavenly Psyche must put off her veil
And step into common nature's crowded rooms
And stand uncovered in that nature's front
And rule its thoughts and fill the body and life.

"One of the reasons why I haven't read Sri Aurobindo very carefully," conceded Dr. Progoff most generously, "is that I might lose all my originality."

"Do you see any hope for man? And in what direction?" I shot my last question.

"Well, I do feel hope, unless of course we are all blown off. The main hope lies in the fact that when and where peoples of different cultures and points of view come together sooner or later they realise that individual doctrines and ways of life can be set in a total perspective and thus lose their separate minutiae. That where basic and fundamental qualities, such as make up man's essential nature, are concerned differences give way and you are brought past argument. That is the level where we really meet—on common ground, of common experience and shared attitudes. About outer, inessential things one can argue, discuss, fight. Not where the deeper communion has been established. Today such a communion of peoples has become possible, even inevitable. It is up to us to make it real and enduring. I feel the levels of communication are deeping. I feel this with respect to even the Communist countries. When the political traumas are over, even the socialist states will be faced with basic human questions and qualities, and we may have another Dostoevsky or a Doctor Zhivago. This points to happier, in the end identical aims. Of course this cannot come about without much pain and suffering. That is the inevitable price of growth. But I don't despair. We might yet conquer time through time, as you might say."

The doctor looked at his watch. We understood.

"Beyond time, beyond timelessness," I whispered.

Dr. Progoff only smiled.

Our one hour was over. Soon we stepped out and merged into New York's afternoon rush and roar. But at the back of our minds, out of the depths, sang another music, of daring and discovery. Walking down the New World's noisy traffic we felt what Arnold had known before and

expressed so well.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life,
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking our true, original course ;

A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart that beats
So wild, so deep in us, to know
Whence our thoughts come and where they go,
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas, none ever mines. . . .

Only—but this is rare—(sometimes)
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again :
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know,
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmur, and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

Shall we ever ?

WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

Geologists and anthropologists have different yardsticks for measuring and classifying the ages of the world and of human culture. Revolutionaries and nationalists regularly revise the calendar and re-write history. When people (if they survive) look back (in anger?) on this absurd age of ours what single event or date is likely to stand out? There is one and only one answer to that. Nuclear fission or, more simply, the Atom Bomb will be that answer, and provide the great divide.

Since the fateful morning of 1945 in the Arizona deserts, and later over Nippon, when the message of the bomb was heard in all its horrendous splendour, history has not stood still. As the first bomb burst Robert Oppenheimer—later to be convicted of Un-American Activity—the overall director of the Operation, quoted, with fear and trembling and amazement, the *Bhagavad Gita* (XI, 12) : *Dibi surya-sahasrasya bhaved yugaduthhita yadi bhah sadrishi sa syadbhasastasya Mahatman*, were a thousand suns to explode suddenly in the sky, their brilliance would approximate to the glory of the sight. He also let fall an uneasy thought, a kind of *mea culpa* for the scientific brotherhood responsible for the reification. The physicist, he said, had touched sin. It is a frightful thought that the otherwise paternal pacifist, Albert Einstein, a victim of Nazi anti-Semitism, should have triggered this development.

The thunderclap heard that day on the Arizona bad lands has gone round the world. The great debate, crisis of choice and conscience is still on, and will be so for some time. But, who knows, the explosion, the loss of life and the

shadow of racial suicide was meant not so much to scare us (Russell, Schweitzer, Mumford *et al*) to death as to provide a revision of goals and assumptions, a breakthrough—to a new and re-constituted psyche and society, purged by the fire bath, the shock therapy. The nuclear weapon is a symbol and its significance must be grasped. Many minds, in all parts of the world, have been engaged in deciphering the code—this Riddle of the Sphinx brought uptodate.

A look at some of the reflections can be an education in awareness.

On the intellectual plane its implications are quite different from the popular view. Two of the continuing assumptions of science have been : control and manipulation of Nature and making life easy ; and as a guide to the Nature of Things. But, as the wise have been quick to notice, the first premise no longer holds because a force can hardly be said to be under control when it threatens to destroy all civilization and, possibly, all life. The second assumption is also not tenable because the physical universe and its ways have turned out to be different from what had so far been confidently assumed. In any case, the materialist hypothesis is as good as gone. As Joseph Wood Krutch has pointed out, "If a city is destroyed because a small group of men were ready to proceed on the assumption that $E=MC^2$, then we are willing to grant that matter and energy are really convertible. That is, what is material at one moment may become, in an instant, not material at all. The metaphysical consequence, if we survive to enjoy them, may be salutary as well as immeasurable."

The imminence of nuclear Nirvana has brought forth other salutary and searching suggestions. For instance, it has forced W. H. Auden to draw up what might be called Four Timely Noble Truths. First, the bomb has destroyed, at a stroke, the easy faith in automatic Progress, that curious self-deception of post-Renaissance man. Secondly, it has emphasized that the laws of ethics are like the laws of physics, that is we can defy but not break them. Thirdly, it has now become necessary (under threat of extinction) to love my

neighbour as myself. Fourthly, the time has come when we must treat Nature not as a slave but as a partner.

These are the thoughts of a poet, the voice of life. Others have spelt the message in different terms, educational and international. The atom, which "knows no race or nationality" could be used, we are told, for Peace, 'to lift the world's economic level'. The late Dr. Bhaba believed that a widespread atomic industry in the world would necessitate an international society. Frightened into good sense? Something in that, but such changes rarely last and do not go deep enough.

That the possession of the atom bomb or nuclear knowledge involves far-reaching political and social consequences has not escaped attention. Since 1945 our pace has grown faster, and we must be able and willing to change our ways and institutions, while there is time. In *Atoms and People* Lipps points out: "The rapid advance of scientific thought has projected mankind into an alien world where temperatures are measured in millions of degrees and pressures in millions of atmospheres. Man can survive in this violent world only by a similarly spectacular progress in social and political wisdom." Almost immediately after the flash over Hiroshima *The New Yorker* (August 18, 1945), a paper usually given over to frivolities, wrote: "Political plans for the new world, as shaped by statesmen, are not fantastic enough. The only conceivable way to catch up with atomic energy is with political energy directed to a universal structure."

Other, more profound, consequences and conclusions are no doubt possible. Some of these were worked out by the late Teilhard de Chardin in his book, *The Future of Man*. To him it appeared that the jinn which man's own hand had loosed had its effect on the soul itself. The atomic stockpile might as well be a holocaust of vestigial *samskaras*. As he put it: "By the liberation of atomic energy on a massive scale, and for the first time, man has not only changed the face of the earth; he has, by the very act set in motion at the heart of his own being a long chain of reactions which, in the brief

flash of an explosion of matter, has made of him, virtually at least, a new being hitherto unknown to himself." The destructive potential of the atom is but a mirror to man's own fury and mire. The law of psychic compensation, *à la* Jung, might lead to a quite opposite result—of a discovery or re-discovery, of man's lost or hidden creative potential. The state of "psychic disarray" which the atomic shock has induced forces us to a crisis and a choice where both conflict and solution will have to be operated by other means and on a different level. Briefly, to use Western myth figures, the choice is between the Promethean and Faustian spirit, the spirit of love and the spirit of force. In Indian terms, one might say it is a choice between Nilkantha, the blue-throated ascetic who drank up the poison thrown up by the Churning of the Ocean (of Matter?), and Tandava, the *danse macabre* of Shiva. Perhaps the atom "plague" can be cured only by a recourse to the Atman. The release of atomic energy calls for a corresponding release of charity which, according to Oxford anthropologist Marett, is the only true index of human progress. This the world will one day know, if it is capable of learning, and getting over the dilemma of its desperate, disproportionate development: intellectual giant, moral robot.

The enhanced sense of power brings its own corrective and induces a change of plan in our strategy. The victory over physical Nature needs to be matched by a similar victory over self, by some appropriate *samyama* or *tapasya*, self-control or spiritual-energising. Fantastic? The alternative is too dreadful to contemplate.

After the famous sunrise in Arizona man not only can but must co-operate with his own becoming. Also the fact that the researches were necessarily conducted by a large group goes only to show that "in this as in other fields nothing in the universe can resist the converging energies of a sufficient number of minds sufficiently grouped and organised", that the spirit of collective *sadhana* is the need of the hour. The moral is clear: thanks to the thunder (*Da Datta Dayadhvam*, give, sympathise, control) there now exists in each of us a man whose mind has been opened

to the meaning, the responsibility and the aspirations of his cosmic function in the universe, a man, that is to say, who, whether he likes it or not, has been transformed into another man, in his very depths. That is, if we care the Atomic Age. could be not an age of mutual and total disaster but of union in research—in reality and human development. Such a research would be possible only in a cathartic framework, in calm of mind all passion spent. The final effect of the light cast by the atomic fire might illumine the over-riding question of the ultimate end of human evolution—*mahamanav* or *atmohanojanah*, superman or suicide?

In exploding the atom we took our first bite at the fruit of the great discovery, says de Chardin, and this was enough for a taste to enter our mouths that can never be washed away: the taste for super-creativity. Could the Abyss be also a way towards the Heights? The way down is the way up?

THE INTELLECTUAL

AN INDIAN VIEW

In one of his early novels, *Those Barren Leaves*, a Huxley character asks a question and himself provides a characteristic, cynical answer. Question : On what condition can I live a life of contentment ? Answer : On the condition that you do not think. Why should this be so ? Perhaps because to think is to differ. Is it also to suffer : where but to think is to be full of sorrow ? Was Satan the first rebel and intellectual, the original outsider whose punishment fitted the crime ? Is free or rational thinking a heresy and a temptation or is it a necessity in our total becoming ? What is the role of reason in nature, society and history ? What has the intellectual done and been like, what are his motive and function that we should ask these questions ? Luckily, we do not have to wait for an answer, for the intellectual is his own publicity agent. In a sense the whole of modern civilization, with its problems no less than achievements, is his extended image, at once his shame and glory. He is both our hero and the villain of the piece.

Thinker, wise man, Man Thinking, as Emerson called him, or *manomaya purusha* as we might call him, is not a new thing. Such thinkers have existed in every culture and country, even, to believe the anthropologists, in primitive societies. How then are we to distinguish the new from the older type of thinkers ? By their characteristic features, rather *the* characteristic feature. The older thinkers had, or thought they had, some kind of overall faith, in a moral, cosmic or

transcendant order. Very often this faith would be reflected in the social order or milieu, to which the thinker, priest, magician, brahmin, belonged. By contrast, the modern thinker, the intellectual, does *not* belong. He is 'anti' and alone. For quite some time every man has not only been his own priest but also a professor of ethics. Its logical consequence has been that settled state of anarchy which we know so well but do not know how to get rid of. The modern intellectual accepts nothing on trust, except his proud and necessary faith in reason and individuality. He exists because he thinks, rather because he doubts. At times little better than a propagandist of culture or social and political agitator, he is the protagonist of the modern order of ideas, including the Idea of Progress. He represents the breakthrough from the mediaeval to the modern times. How did this close connection between intellectual theories and social and political revolution come about? History will tell, especially modern European history.

The intellectual, as we know him today, is indeed a modern avatar, and his western origin need not be denied. In his present form his origin hardly goes back beyond the French Revolution. The French *philosophes* began as determined enemies of the *ancien régime* and its ancillary, the dogmas and privileges of the established Church. Voltaire's *Ecrasez l'infame*, the infamy must be destroyed, is a classic statement of the iconoclast attitude of the Enlightenment towards the Establishment. It was essentially a Declaration of the Independence of Reason, the highest developed faculty of man at his present point of evolution, as an Indian thinker has described it. As against an outmoded hierarchy the intellectual's natural regard for democracy (where one individual is as good as another) and socialism (where, theoretically at least, there is equal opportunity for all) is understandable. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century intellectuals everywhere—our own Nehru included—inclined towards the Left. In a Godless universe this was the only God, of Reason and Revolution. Here the role of the Russian intelligentsia is revealing. As an article in

Encounter put it: "The word *intelligentzia*' which essentially denotes 'free professions', soon acquired undertones of opposition to the régime. No member of the *intelligentzia* could be a supporter of the régime, and no convinced supporter of the régime could be considered as a member of the *intelligentzia*." It is a matter of history that the American, French and Russian revolutions have been the work, largely, of dissatisfied intellectuals, thinkers and artists, members of 'free professions' and 'writers in arms'. The struggle for the Indian independence brings the some evidence. The growing alienation of the thinker from the administration is one of the unhappy features of India today.*

Chafing under an unjust and irrational system, the intellectuals everywhere dreamed of a new, streamlined order, utopia without tears. Ideology and utopia are close cousins. Sometimes to the passion for reform and revolution, the dream of quick perfection, was added a conspiratorial note. In his *Anatomy of Revolution* Crane Brinton has shown how in order to achieve their laudable ends theorists and idealists have frequently been driven to adopt means that are far from open or ethical. Also, an added agony, if and when the revolution gets going the mechanism of control tends to go out of their hands, and the intellectuals soon find that they, even they, are being led rather than leading, that they have to toe the Party line. It is an uncomfortable position which has caused them much heartsearching. Whether they admit it or not, they know that they have but changed one dogma, one Authority, for another. In other words, the Divine Right to be wrong has been transferred from the crowned heads to the leaders of the Almighty Party. In every dictatorship, that logical end of the curve of reason, large-scale revisionism and heresy-hunting has been the order of the day. It has not spared former leaders, as the successive de-bunking of Stalin and Khrushchev, once colossi now dust and ashes, will show. The dramatics of dialectics have turned freedom into its exact opposite, a slavery far worse than any tyrant of the past ever

* Recently reviewing "Twenty Years of Independence" a member of the judiciary arrives at the sad conclusion: "The intellectual is nowhere."

desired or had the power to impose. The triumph of abstract doctrines has spelled disaster for the individual. The doctrinaire distorts experience. As Lewis Mumford has repeatedly told us, The fallacy of systems is a very general one. As he sees it, since the seventeenth century we have been living in an age of system-makers and, what is worse, system-apppliers. But reason and science can only mechanize and standardize. Man must be on guard, warn the voices, like Gabriel Marcel and Rabindranath Tagore, against the indiscriminate application of abstractions to life, the terrible tendency towards what some American sociologists call Thingification. In a strictly run Soviet, that land of purges and brianwashings, these critics would have no chance of airing their views. In fact, they would run the risk of being 'liquidated' or done away with. The Hitlerian boast about socializing the souls of the citizens was based on an intellectual suicide or slaughter.*

In spite of his enthusiasm, and achievement in the non-human fields, the intellectual has had a perplexed, unhappy career, for ever haunted by a paradox or series of paradoxes. In the western democracies despair has mounted high and many intellectuals have seen their early dreams turn into nightmare. (Post-independent India is no exception.) As a result groups and individuals have plunged straight into over-subtle philosophies of anxiety and nothingness. The intellectual, once so certain of himself, so proud of his powers of analysis and prediction, now lives for the most part on the edge of the abyss. For many an intellectual to be or not to be a Communist seems to be the only question. The narrowing of choice is a measure of his shrinking universe.

Apart from his undoubted success in the non-human realms the question of the intellectual's role in society is part of a wider problem, the problem of leadership and participation. The philosophers, thought Marx, had so far interpreted the world. It was left to the intellectual and the revo-

* That in this he was aided by a few brilliant but irresponsible, misguided thinkers only adds to the tragedy.

lutionary—in Marx's dictionary the two were synonyms—to change the world. But Marx apart, the world's attitude towards the pure thinker—and the pure thinker, it may be added, tends to move away from life—has been ambivalent : a mixture of contempt and admiration. Men of affairs are congenitally suspicious of the thinking tribe, the lean and hungry look of those who think too much. Anti-intellectuals, which include such redoubtable figures as the Duke of Wellington, Winston Churchill and Napoleon, have expressed their open dislike of the class as a whole. The Iron Duke referred to the intellectuals as "a scribbling set". In a telling phrase Churchill called the communists and their fellow-travellers as "a gang of ruthless and bloodyminded professors". Napoleon's objection stemmed after he had turned himself Emperor and virtually betrayed the Revolution. He feared and hated the intellectuals — tyrants always do — and called them "foolish ideologues", who wanted to try their new-fangled egalitarian theories and mess up everything, and about whose loyalty he could never be sure. When Hitler came to power the *Putsch* or purge began with the universities. One of its immediate consequences was that America gained Albert Einstein and the atom bomb was on its way.

The passionate espousal of political causes by intellectuals has its critics, even within the fold. Practical matters are not the concern of philosophy, that was Hegel's view, how serious one does not know. In his once famous tract for the times, *La Trahison des Clercs*, Julien Benda had described this concern with politics and practical matters as a betrayal of the intellectual's true profession or *svadharma*. The *clerc*, by which he meant something like the brahmin, is, by definition, "above the battle". As Benda put it : "That class of men whom I shall designate as the 'clerics', by which term I shall mean all those whose activity is essentially *not* the pursuit of practical aims." Perhaps every society needs them. And yet theorists like St. Simon or Comte, who could not order their own lives, loved to plan the life of generations to come. On the contrary, examples of deliberate detachment from the life and problems of the people are not wanting.

Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, Galileo, Descartes, Pascal, Kepler, Newton, Pasteur, among others. Did not Goethe himself say : Let us leave politics to the diplomats and soldiers ? Browning's Grammarian thought the same : Leave Now to apes, Man has for ever.

Some, however, insist that the intellectual *ought* to involve himself in the life of the moment and the group. Theory has to be tested in life. As a matter of fact they have often participated, or interfered, with startling results.* Lenin's *What's To Be Done ?* deals virtually with methods of training intellectuals as professional revolutionaries. The "coffee-house intellectual" can change roles. Trotsky, for instance (though in the end he had to lose before the less intellectual Stalin). But it has been pointed out that if and when intellectuals take part in politics they do so as men and not as artists or thinkers. "The artist (as artist) does not fight." Like Goya he practises his art amid the canons in Madrid. Or, like Tagore, resolves "to sing of the jasmine in front of the roar of battle".

But what about Krishna, who argued metaphysics on the battlefield, but proved himself to be a champion of the active life, active but non-attached ? This is an idea or solution which does not seem to have struck either the supporters of intellectual involvement or transcendence. Here, in the wisdom of the Gita, is a simple and enduring solution which the intellectuals of the world could learn many times over from India or the Great Tradition now so much in abeyance everywhere. As Russell Kirk has pointed out, Freedom is the absence of desire, including, one might add, the desire of the fruit of one's action, *anasakti*. The insight is as much a part of Christian, Stoic as of the Indian tradition, a tradition which the modern intellectual cannot, rather will not accept or understand. The reason is simple. For him ideas or, what is worse, partial ideas have become interests. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "As others are subject to the tyranny of

* In the cautionary words of Eric Hoffer, much of the turmoil of our time may be due to the fact that in many parts of the world intellectuals have become men of action.

their interests, prejudices, instincts or passions, so the intellectual is subject to the tyranny of ideas. Indeed, he turns these into interests." An interested party is neither free nor can it become an agent of freedom.

Talking of India, if spiritual tradition is to be trusted, her ancient Wise Men, the Rishis, were men of insight rather than intellectuals. And why were they not intellectuals? Because they did not overrate the role of reason or intellect in understanding reality. They kept it in place as a necessary and subordinate function, useful and indispensable, but unable by itself to arrive at either a full knowledge of the world or of self, powerful in studying a range of processes but helpless in understanding purposes and in the end perhaps creating more problems than it knows how to solve. The ancients were careful enough to draw a distinction between the Higher and Lower Knowledge, between the knowledge of things and the knowledge of self. This does not mean, as is too readily assumed, that they were indifferent to human concerns or were kind of pessimists. On the contrary they were, in their own way, revolutionaries and optimists. The revolution that they proposed, and no doubt practised, is the ultimate revolution that any self-conscious culture or individual can propose to itself. It is an advice which agrees at heart with what the statue of Apollo in Louvre had told Rilke: *Change your life. Be enraptured with the flame within.* Between this Change from Within and Change from Without (to use an old distinction) lies the long and melancholy history of a heresy and error of judgment which calls itself modern civilization. Creating a perfect world with imperfect, untransformed individuals has been the intellectual's perennial error and disappointment which the wise have, wisely, spared themselves.

Throughout Indian history or tradition we have examples of outstanding thinkers who cannot yet be called intellectuals and who might be unwilling to be so classified. What about Adi Shankara, Swami Vivekananda, or Sri Aurobindo? Are they intellectuals? And are they better or worse? Obviously they are not intellectuals if by that term is meant one who has

an unqualified faith in the supremacy of reason, that opiate of the intellectual. The plain fact is, in the Indian View of Life reality is more and other than rational. According to this view, "the rational or intellectual man is not the least and highest ideal of manhood nor would a rational society be the last and highest expression of an aggregate human life,—unless indeed we give to the word, 'reason', a wider meaning than any it now possesses". That is, in order to qualify to be an intellectual an Indian may have to scrap his one national tradition or attitude, that reality is more than an intellectual proposition or an object of analysis.* This, we repeat, is not to denigrate the role of reason. Only we must not be carried away by its exclusive claims and methods of operation. Long before Bergson the Indian thinkers knew reason was the helper, reason is the bar.

To sum up : the intellectual is a modern avatar and marks the transition from the mediaeval to the modern world-view, scientific and utilitarian. A product of the Age of Reason, the intellectual began by setting his teeth against all forms of Faith and Authority, ecclesiastical and social, and ended with a heartless Organisation Man and *Brave New World* or *Walden Two*. Reason prompted him to question all accepted truths and dogmas (except, alas, the dogma of reason) ; it also prompted him to participate, if not lead, mass movements and large-scale revolutions throughout the world. But, the question seems unavoidable, did he at any time represent the people ? Was he ever its chosen leader ? Or was he but seeking power and self-expression for himself and his like ? Was the cry of a classless society, which few today take seriously, an empty slogan, a necessary myth ? His quarrel with Authority, was that too anything more than a form of veiled rivalry, a rationalization of resentment, in which the middle class, from which most intellectuals come anyway, was trying to wrest power for itself and dominate the social scene ?

The motivation of the intellectual, it is clear, is not above suspicion. For a fact, there have been plenty of turncoats

* It is true such men exist, among them some will known "unknown Indians". The less said !

among the tribe. The ruling group knows this quite well and the continuous seduction of talent by the Establishment goes on unabated. In all countries intellectuals have been lured into the lush labyrinth of administration and, if lucky, into the ministry itself. "The higher they raise their brow, the lower they bend their knee." It is better to be not too specific.

Some intellectuals are no doubt opportunists. But the genuine variety is also there, and not merely the more plentiful and bothersome pseudo-intellectual. And if and when revolution, that pet child of the intellectual, succeeds? What then? In most cases Disillusionment, with a capital 'D'. This is part of the romantic agony. As one of them recollected it in anything but tranquillity :

We poets in our youth begin in gladness

But thereof comes in the end despondency and gloom.

Due to some strange miscalculation or rift between ends and means the passage from the imagined ideal to the actual becomes a painful reality. And then the intellectuals go into exile or self-exile, are silenced or commit suicide. Or else they loudly publicise their loss of faith and books like *The God That Failed* begin to be best-sellers. Such literature of disillusionment has become a stock in trade and includes illustrious names like Bertrand Russell, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, Simone Weil and others. A new Dante would find their example useful. The modern intellectuals surely deserve a reserved seat in Purgatorio, gullible idealists chasing the will-o'-the-wisp and getting bogged.

But, as we have seen, in the traditional view (so little understood by the crude conservatives) the true thinker is or supposed to be free from local and temporal interests, "above the battle". This does not mean that he is ineffective but that he employs other means. The revolution that the true thinker, as contrasted with the modern intellectual, proposes begins with the individual rather than with large masses. It is a movement from within without. This means that for the artist and thinker there is no authority other than his own incorruptible conscience, even if that conscience should err

or give wrong advice. The intellectual cannot sell or subordinate his intellect, sacrifice it at the altar of a party, country or particular interest. His loyalties are wider, if not impersonal. The honest thinker will judge every issue on its independent merit, he will also have the humility to admit the limits of reason. It is impossible for him to be exclusively Left or Right. As Orwell saw it, today it is perhaps a bad sign in a writer if he is not suspected of reactionary tendencies, just as previously it was a bad sign if he was not suspected of Communist sympathies. The wheel has come full circle. The true intellectual finds it hard to accept any master, old or new. According to Camus, "The tyrannies of today are improved, they do not admit of silence or neutrality. One has to take a stand, be either for or against. In that case, I am against." This makes the intellectual a permanent one-man Member of the Opposition, an unenviable role in the best of times. Is the intellectual a modern version of the Wandering Jew and suffering the badge of the tribe? Or is he the Peter Pan of revolution? In either case, freedom is as far from Moscow as from Rome.

From a slightly different, but to us familiar, point of view we might say that the intellectual tends to forget that the rational image of man and reality is fragmentary and provisional. Also, that without a purification of the will, the intellect is never a safe guide, at any rate not in dealing with human affairs. In the words of Shelley, our calculations have outrun our conception, we have eaten more than we can digest. (The Tree of Atomic Knowledge?) In words that Sri Ramakrishna might approve, the intellectual might have *buddhi*, intellect, perhaps more than is good for him, but he does not have *shuddhabuddhi*, an intellect purified of passions.* Must, then, the tragedy of Dr. Faustus repeat itself, on a cosmic scale, before we learn? Experience keeps a costly

* See "The hardest thing in the world for the intellectual to learn is that he cannot do everything by means of his great talents and gifts. He must submit to Grace. And Grace, like the words of a great teacher, is given only at the moment the receiver is ready for it, neither sooner nor later." Margaret Rudd, *The Divided Image*, p. 221. How long it will take the intellectual, not necessarily a heretic, to arrive at the "moment" or turning point is anybody's guess.

school, but fools, including intellectual fools, will learn in no other.

In the words of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the new world can be achieved only by those who are moved by great ideals ; what is wanted is not knowledge but charity. After all, the greatest progress is a progress in charity. Years back Mahatma Gandhi had been asked by an American missionary what he considered to be the most dangerous sign of the times. The hard-heartedness of the modern thinkers, was the Mahatma's brief but pointed answer.

Such wisdom, insight or charity as we have tried to outline, it was not possible to do more, cannot be imposed or collectivized. It has to be learnt by each, alone. The thinker is essentially lonely. *Erasmus est pro se*, Erasmus stands alone. This has interesting consequences. In spite of their democratic disclaimers these lonely thinkers, "highbrows" or "messianic bohemians", often carry a tinge of the aristocrat about them. Plato's God, it has been noticed, was busy with geometric problems, an esoteric activity in which the majority has little interest or ability. Carrying cards, waving flags or going Red can easily become a pose, a status symbol even.

Such pleasant foibles apart, the intellectual, a lonely élite, would seem to owe no allegiance to any outside authority except truth as he sees or understands it. That, one might say, is both his beginning and end. The intellectual is not a class or a specialist, he really represents an attitude, he is one who keeps, or hopes to keep, the world safe for sanity. Who can deny the worth of his presence? Without him, the "scavenger of history", our modern world would cease to be. The Prometheus of our progress, even his opposition, his passionate faith in system, can be creative. It can break moulds, if not make new ones. His errors are no less instructive than the few occasions when he has been proved to be right. All in all it is hard to deny the values and disvalues for which he has been held equally responsible.

A creature of contemporary history, perhaps a passing phase, the danger of the intellectual's presence, his ruthless criticism and larger loyalty, are needed for social advance and

awareness, for "those claims of remote posterity which constitute the last appeal of the religion of humanity". Without him we would all rot. With all his errors and excesses the intellectual bears witness to the secret struggle of countless human beings carrying on the anxious enterprise of living under the awful modern conditions and, more than that, to the ethics of infinite and mysterious obligations from on high, to use William James' words. May be he works within a vicious circle, of self-imposed limitations. But as the wise have always known, reason by itself cannot long maintain the race in its progress. In that case, the intellectual's salvation lies in ceasing to be an intellectual. But if we cannot set a laurel on his brow, there is no need to write his epitaph in a hurry. Not so soon at any rate. He has perhaps further to go, more mistakes to make, more to learn as well as offer. The intellect, after all, is a stage and not the summit. But in our longing for the summit we are not allowed to leave or leap over any stage. Even when we say a final 'Farewell' to the intellectual something of him will remain in the upward journey, the gift of a clarified intellect in the service of that which is more than the intellect. Had, it is true, the intellectual been more intelligent if not wise, not merely a barbarian of the intellect, he would perhaps not have been an intellectual. But it is better to be more than an intellectual and not less.

WINGS OF DESTINY

Die Eule der Minerva beginnt ihren Flug erst mit der einbrechenden Dämmerung, when the shades of night gather, the owls of Minerva fly. Four of these stuffed owls : Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche and Kafka still haunt the mid-twentieth century. Modern history has amply borne out their uncanny insights, their premonitions and predicaments. If in retrospect these seers of Nihilism—"the total bankruptcy towards which the whole of Europe seems to be heading"—appear less as doctors and more as symptoms of disease that precisely may be their function. Not only representative men but scapegoats, not saviours but scourges. Which society does not need them ?

Rather romantically, the lot has been compared to the Horsemen of the Apocalypse. It is a flattering but false image. Too agonised and broken, basically uncertain and chaotic, to be the stuff of which culture heroes are made, the quartet sings like banshee, like voices of doom of Western European *Angst* which has become another name for the state of man today. Part of their pathos and meaning is to be found in their very impotent rage or overdone melancholy ("my sadness is my castle," said Kierkegaard, but without learning charity), in the cruel fact that, without positive and socially shared values, there is no way out. A mutation of romantic malaise, their message remains largely negative. May be that is all that our disinherited minds can hope for : over the bridge of sighs to eternity, as one of them has said.

In his lifetime Kierkegaard, *fons et origo* of the existential stream or strategy, was not only derided but nearly completely misunderstood. A figure of fun, his

cartoons appeared regularly in the Danish papers. Even street children jeered at him, and shouted : *Either-Or, Either-Or*. The middle class saw in him an avowed enemy of their settled ways, the Hans Andersen fairy tale world which was all that they knew or wanted to know. And since Kierkegaard rejected both their control and security, the Church and the State were equally suspicious of his slightest move. His motive and strategy went unnoticed. So little do people understand me that they will not even understand my complaint that they do not understand me, wrote the miserable *penseur*.

He didn't make it easy for them either. For instance, he harboured contradictions ("I too have both the tragic and the comic in me," he wrote), and specialized in a kind of indirect communication, evocative rather than expository, provocative rather than philosophically cogent. His doctoral thesis had been on the Concept of Irony. It was a concept to which his writings were a lively witness. The result was only to be expected : "I am witty and people laugh—but I cry."

Early in life Kierkegaard had seen the difference between alternate ways of living and he had drawn his fateful distinction : *Either/Or*. He had distinguished, a little too sharply, among the Aesthetic, the Ethical and the Religious Ways. He did not consider their possible reconciliation and himself never quite outgrew the first. The analysis of Mozart's *Don Juan* (in part echoed by Bernard Shaw) was drawn from a side of his temperament which he revealed in *Diary of a Seducer*. The mystery of his breaking off an engagement to Regina Olsen has not been fully solved. What was the "thorn in the flesh" that he talked of—his father's sexual irregularity or some lapse of his own? We shall never know. But like Don Juan he too knew the ultimate boredom and despair, the unreality, that lies in wait for every hedonist. But, another of those paradoxes that is part of life, the hedonist carried a puritan within his wounded breast. None so angry with the aesthete as the aesthete himself. Or why else did Plato, the most poetical of philosophers, turn out the

poets from his ideal republic? But their respective motives were different and mark the ancient from the modern ways of thinking and being. Kierkegaard who took upon himself the task of being a Christian in spite of the Church, condemned the poet's self-absorption in his art. From the Christian point of view and in spite of all aesthetics, wrote Kierkegaard, any poet's existence is a sin, viz., that one occupies oneself with God and truth only in one's imagination instead of experiencing both existentially. Plato's ukase had been based on the doctrine or Idea of Essence, Kierkegaard's on the experience of Existenz. In between lie centuries of displacement of interest and emphasis.

Withal Kierkegaard was an ethicist, a champion of the strenuous life, but solo. To exist as human being means, according to him, to exist ethically. That is, a life not only of decision but of action, *engagé*, as the later French phrase has it. Essentially a lonely and agonised figure, Kierkegaard despised pure or abstract thinking, detested The Life Theoretic. He is, thus, not an intellectual. Pure thinking, he thought, was a phantom, a form of betrayal. According to Kierkegaard, God does not think, He creates. That is, the logic of faith or the Creator's faith as we may call it, differs from the logic of the sciences, of philosophy and analysis. Hence Kierkegaard's lifelong castigation of systems such as Hegel's which pretended to cut the *complexio oppositorium*, the complex mystery of the reality of opposites, into the neat platitudes of all-too-human dialectics. All the same Kierkegaard was not the anti-intellectual ("quack, quack") that he has sometimes been made out to be. What he did was to emphasize the inadequacy of reason as a guide to faith. Not for him the celebrated Consolations of Philosophy. Kierkegaard should, thus, be distinguished from those members of schools of modern Existential philosophy which have erected huge systems even while protesting against it. For himself—and how to be himself was one of his obsessions—he preferred a Leap in the Dark, an austere, characteristic choice by the individual face to face with God, without any intermediary. God without Church or, in his own words,

"reintroducing Christianity into Christendom", such was his self-appointed task. Another Protestant.

Here perhaps we touch upon the heart of the matter. In an age of cheerless conformity, or what appeared to him as such, Kierkegaard's quest was for a real encounter with religious experience. Lonely and persecuted, his life is a search for What It Is To Be A Christian. But as he saw or knew it, "One can be a Christian only in opposition." That is, when everybody becomes a bland, card-carrying Christian Christianity declines. What about the Church? Here Kierkegaard's views were less than charitable. The Church had become a walking parody, a business enterprise, engaged in what mediaeval Indian saints called *dharmavanijya*, trading in religion, salvation-peddlers. Today's young minister, wrote Kierkegaard in a well-planted example, is not a seeker of the Absolute, but for a safe clerical position. (He himself had turned down a church offer.)

A year before his death he said: "Why do we no longer see the contradiction between Christianity's nature as polemical and the State's essence?" Opinion will differ whether polemic is a characteristic of Christianity. But consistent in life as in death, Kierkegaard refused the last sacrament at the hands of a state official.

For himself he preferred irony to exposition. *Fear and Trembling, Sickness Unto Death, Exercises in Christianity* and other works are less logical expositions than bitter, at times morbid attacks by the stricken deer. He described his writings as a form of 'revenge'. The story of a parson whose sermon had deeply affected his audience is typical. According to Kierkegaard the parson consoles the disconsolate audience thus: "Don't cry, my children. There is still a chance that it is not all true."

Such was the cryptic and challenging Kierkegaard, a sophisticated Savonarola, whose rediscovery has been an incalculable influence, for good and worse, on crisis literature and crisis theology.

An unsettled, epileptic, abysmal character, Dostoevsky knew of the things of which he wrote. His *Memoirs of the*

House of the Dead was based on his experience in a Siberian prison. Characteristically he discovered among the criminals, thieves and murderers, "deep, strong, wonderful natures, wonderful people". More telling and traumatic was his last-minute reprieve, a cold December morning of 1849, from hanging. He never got over the shock of that mock trial.

Most of his writings deal with extreme situations, overhung with a sense of uncontrollable passion, a sense of primitive conflict as well as sudden moments of truth or vision—of Christ, Church and Mother Russia.

Dostoevsky is not a safe or easy author, abounding in technical flaws easy to detect. Not unaware of these formal failings he wrote in self-defence: "I want to express certain ideas even if the artistic factors of my work are lost." One of the chief ideas that he intensely believed in and wanted to express was the uniqueness of the Russian psyche and destiny. His Pushkin address contained a frank statement of his pan-Slavic faith. The Russian psyche as it revealed itself in his novels was often neither normal nor pleasing. One characteristic carried over from book to book was their loud and public self-analysis, a colossal confessional. In *The Possessed* (chap. XXVIII) the characters were "less speaking than shouting at each other", shouting each others' secrets. In *The Idiot* (chap. XIV) fairly sophisticated characters engage in a frightful, and fascinating, confession game. How to explain this? Possibly because they are parvenus to consciousness and cannot bear the burden. These faults and cracks in the psychic armour are evidence of inner dislocation and upheaval. But these are our possible portraits, the real I, which men hide from themselves, "the many-tongued chaos of consciousness".

Also a good portion of his characters appear to be outcasts, in whom corruption alternates with bursts of moral insight and greatness, even saintliness, an untraditional version of the Eliotian formula: horror, boredom and glory. Dostoevsky's technique, confused rather than consistent, does not deal with well-arranged plots. But in spite of such incoherence, perhaps because of it, through some sixth

sense operating intermittently, he can lay bare the naked human soul, the "underground man" as few authors can. His appalling gallery of men and women—in whom, as Berdyaev points out, "a chasm opened in the depths of man himself, and therein God and Heaven, the Devil and Hell are revealed anew"—is a psychotic and spectral world. The question of identity, of schizophrenia which looms so large in the modern world, crisscrosses the pages of Dostoevsky. We meet, without surprise, an innocent prostitute like Sonia Samanovna and a saintly adulteress like Sonia Andreisvena, and an athetist Cardinal of the Church. The triumph is that these characters, with an immense "leisure for chaos", are more than wooden moral allegories. They have enough substance in them to disturb us into an uninhibited encounter with self, with hidden dimensions of our personality.

• There is no doubt something raw and ridiculous, violent and disturbing, "tragico-fantastic", about these characters and their sometime absurd situations. The hero of *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* wishes to commit suicide because he has treated a child unkindly. Aloysha seeks spiritual sustenance from Father Zossima before going to Greshenka, with dubious intentions, but who in the end finds back his faith in God through her. The Second Coming as presented by the Grand Inquisitor is startling, partly because that is how it might happen and we do not wish to admit it.

The new interest in Dostoevsky is not hard to explain. He foreshadowed the collapse of bourgeois values; also the coming of the new science, or pseudo-science of psychoanalysis (though Freud is reported to have been allergic to him); he is close to the new aesthetics and new modes of perception which have brought back into favour painters like El Greco, Bosch, Gruenewald and Rouault. In his hands saints and sinners hurly-burly till it is hard to say Who's Who. Enacted on the brink of death or moral collapse, the novels hint, impressively, at the Fall of Man. (Resurrection, no less.) Above all, they are swept by apocalyptic storms: "This antheap, without a Church and Christianity. . . . The

fourth estate is rising, it will smash the door." The idea, it may be pointed out, was echoed by Swami Vivekananda who of course drew a somewhat different moral. Dostoevsky anticipated many of the features of our unhappy times. Dictatorship, if not of the proletariat, is indicated by the Grand Inquisitor to Ivan Karmazov. There is a passage in *The Possessed* which prefigures the myth of the State: "Then we shall give them the quite humble happiness of weak creatures such as they are by nature. . . . The most painful secrets of their conscience, all, they will bring to us and we shall have an answer to all." More simply, Dostoevsky seemed to sum up the history of human destitution and the chaotic quest for salvation that lacerates every human soul, now and always. Behind the parade of Reason and Culture he saw the naked creature, the Emperor's clothes of the Enlightenment, its utter soul-lessness. "We all, we all are empty," says a character in *The Possessed*, speaking for all of us.

A good deal of Dostoevsky's fury was directed against Europe whose end, he felt and wished, was near. Only Russia and her people had the strength to survive and forge ahead. This is a brand of pan-Slavism vastly different from Turgenev's, who looked upon his countrymen as boors and barbarians. Dostoevsky did not put faith in the middle class or the intelligentsia (who now spend their time writing theses on him) but the people, the *narod*. In this he was not entirely wrong but he was not entirely right either. He certainly did not foresee the direction that the USSR would take, the Godless collective, even if one of his character had uncannily observed that "A Russian Revolution will unfailingly start with atheism". It is another irony or paradox of Dostoevsky's character that though he spoke mystically of the soil and of Holy Russia—"Kiss the earth," says the Elder Zossima to Aloysha—he himself was a city man, a novelist of duality because of leading a double life.

The brilliant young student and professor (at twenty-six), son of a pastor, coming from a *gut bürgerlicher* (solid middle class) background and brought up by solicitous

women Nietzsche turned against all that and much else with savage fury. Hurling defiance at European society and history, he illustrates "How to Philosophize with a Hammer". A rhapsodic rather than an academic critic, his earliest work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, interpreted Greek art and drama à la Schopenhauer, whose idea of an irrational Will in nature appealed to young Nietzsche. The book, while it strayed beyond aesthetics and classical philology, emphasized the difference between the Apollonian and Dionysian elements, showed a frank preference for the latter. In philosophy Nietzsche was not a rationalist and looked upon Socrates as the ruin of the age and of the spirit of philosophy. His affinities were with the pre-Socratic school, especially with Heraclitus. His own life supplied the necessary powder: "Always I have written my works with my whole body and life, I do not know what is meant by intellectual problems." Sick and solitary, he wove his dreams and denunciations in course of his long mountain walks, the demented Rishi of a ruined world. It is a crucial fact, he wrote *de profundis*, that the spirit prefers to descend upon the sick and suffering. Perhaps so, but not to heal.

Through his successive volumes, *Human All-Too Human*, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche carried on a restless attack against convention, his "revaluation of values". There is something frenetic and fragmentary about his output or outbursts. But apart from a monotonously raucous tone, he can be how tonic! His evocative, explosive essays were less systematic philosophy and more an assortment of agonised appeal. Master (sometime servant) of language, of provocative, if perverse, ideas his books, especially *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, revealed a far-flung influence. One of the War (I) aims of the Allies had been: Nietzsche. This is not so surprising when one knows that during World War I the German soldiers usually carried two books: The New Testament and *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, the newer testament.

What is the gospel according to the newer testament? Elementary: *God is dead!* This apparently silly notion or

bad joke, which he chronically and copiously annotated, turned out to be a convenient slogan. One has only to connect it with Nietzsche's pronounced anti-Jewish, anti-Christian tirade. He vituperated the Christian ethic of poverty and humility, called it a slave morality, *Sklavenreligion*, which had sapped the vitality of the Northern races. The New Testament he dismissed as "the gospel of a completely ignoble species of men". The search for a Northern avatar fastened for a time on Richard Wagner, a colourful, corybantic personality. But the hero revealed his feet of clay and, after a stormy battle, the two parted company. But Nietzsche went on preaching the Dark God, whose mouthpiece he had become. Indeed, he proclaimed himself as a successor of the god whose death he had covered as a self-appointed special representative. "How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? . . . Must not ourselves become gods simply to seem worthy of it?" The wish was not granted. During his last illness, when his mental balance was completely gone, he would sometime sign his letters as "Crucified Christ". The history of ideas has fewer ironies, or illustration of *hubris*, more telling.

Intensely individual, Nietzsche was vigorously anti-State. To that extent his resurrection by the Nazi and Fascist gangs misses the point. He was, in fact, a Hero-Worshipper. But since the existing supply was not to his liking, he framed one of his own, in terms of the future, the Superman (*Übermensch*), or Asura brought uptodate. He was one of the few who had seen, and welcomed, the coming of the Big Brother, even if he had read him all wrong. The Big Brother would not be an aristocrat, as Nietzsche had hoped, but a boor. Not a saviour but a grave-digger. Nietzsche's aristocratic anarchism spelt itself in other ways too, in terms of Higher History, a projection of his tortured mind. He delighted in destroying, at least in visions of destruction. "We ought to desire the anarchical collapse of the whole of our civilization," he said, sincerely. In frenzied language he celebrated the advent of Nihilism: "What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what no longer

can come differently: the advent of nihilism". His description of the Nihilist fits him well, as one "who judges the world as it exists that it should not be, whereas he says of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist". A great Denier.

A demon rather than a demi-god, his restitution among the Nazis and Fascists is easy to understand. But by rejecting all existing mores and in trying to build from the scratch he exemplifies, "more vividly, than any, the existentialist truth that a philosopher who tries to make himself representative and seriously builds himself a habitation to suit his own intimate needs does not offer a home to others but may enormously enrich the resources out of which others build for their own convenience and dignity". He is a lesson, though perhaps not the lesson that he would have liked to preach. Alone and unloved, he forgot that his hymns to Will to Power were but compensations of a gnawing fear, a weak man's cry and camouflage. His followers have had their innings but, as Bertand Russell has hinted, we may hope that it is coming quickly to a close.

The rise of Franz Kafka, and his niche in the contemporary pantheon, is an augury. It underlines the hopelessness and passivity which mark modern society and consciousness. It is an interpretation of life as a tale told by an idiot but without sound and fury. Foremost among the unheroic prognosticians of doom, Kafka clicked with the post-war (he died in 1924) mood of overall depression. Please treat me as a dream, he had told his friend and biographer, Max Brod. Not a dream, but a nightmare.

Theme, tone and technique are of a piece. In *Metamorphosis* the main character quietly turns into an insect, "some monstrous kind of vermin, a large cockroach". How does it feel? Not bad. Only a "slight sorrow," we are told. In *The Burrow* another short story, a man becomes an animal. In *The Penal Code* the officer-in-charge expatiates on new instruments of torture. But the victims do not know in what their crime consists. Instead of Crime and Punishment we have punishment without crime, a further refinement. K— (we never know his full name, perhaps the anonymity is an

allegory, Thou art That), the sad hero of *The Trial* never learns what his crime, if any, might be. He undergoes a mock trial (but with all laughter strictly *verboten*) in a dark room. In the end he is taken away and decapitated. Just before dying he adds a brief afterthought or summing up: "Like a dog," he says. In *The Castle* the visitor never sees his Invisible Master who has appointed him a land surveyor. There is only a mysterious broken laughter at the other end of the telephone, but mostly and, above all, an icy silence. As for the village (the populace?) and the Castle (the Establishment?) there seems to be no communication, none. In the end K— aligns himself with a family not subject to the Invisible Master and his mysterious kingdom. That is, he remains, throughout, an outsider. *The Hunter Gracchus* who has died long ago cannot leave the world. The one common factor in all these weird, listless tales, is that no one participates in life. Which is another way of saying that this is not life worth living. Is that what Kafka means to say in these prose odes to melancholy?

There are even more fantastic stories or tales of humourless humour in which a mouse worries, a dog investigates life and the dead arise. As Gunthers Anders has noted, Kafka's stories are like animal fables. Yes, but with a difference. The difference is that in Kafka all humanity and human assumptions have ceased to exist. The older animal fables or bestiaries, such as Aesop's or La Fontaine's, were impregnated with human values, values which were accepted or openly recommended. Here, except the hands that wrote these tales, grotesque and masochistic, there is nothing even remotely human, not even by implication. And that, precisely, is the point, is what makes them superb symbols of a segment, if not the whole, of modern living. For instance, the mock trial seems to anticipate, down to the last detail, the policy of liquidation pursued by dictatorships. *The Trial* describes the uniform of the Nazi storm troopers. *The Penal Code* is an advance handout of concentration camps.

The moral of it all is: there is no moral or physical order. It is all Absurd, something of a bad dream or a nightmare.

There is nowhere any trace of choice or resistance in this sub-ethical puppet universe, which yet conveys an unnamed sense of guilt and pathos. It is a godless universe in which the only relationship possible is that of victim or executioner.

The absence of hope, or any palliative purpose, has been held to be part of Kafka's supreme honesty, symbol of achievement. It may one day turn out to be a sign of inferior or heretic vision. The Kafka universe is lonely and cheerless, in which there is neither forgiveness nor hope of resurrection. It is amazing how without being a thinker or a rebel, Kafka has succeeded uniquely in rendering a state of moral exhaustion that has been implicit in the meaningless, modern scientific or police state. But it is all a mute and muted agony, he sees no happy ending and, what is worse, no meaning of suffering.

That surely gives one pause. Critics have looked for theology in these loaded stories and their undercurrent of guilt and that totally Other God, in all of which they have tried to trace his Jewish heritage. At its simplest, theology apart, Kafka is the land surveyor of a culture in which God is dead.

His influence, open and pervasive, on a sizeable section of modern writers is undeniable. The metamorphosis, into an insect, of Gregor Samsa, the salesman hero of a commercial civilisation, has its echoes elsewhere: in Anouilh's *Pièces Noires* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. But perhaps his most explicit symbol is the story of the Couriers, in which men were given the choice to live as king or as couriers. Men preferred to be couriers, that is to live without inner freedom and responsibility. But if men were ever to choose differently, that is choose to be free, the impotent Kafka universe would shatter and his role need to be considerably revalued.

What is the sum and substance of these four eminent outsiders, these mightily end-products of a dying civilisation and their searing and strained versions of reality? Though mostly unknown to each other, they bear a kind of kinship. But are they merely symptoms of disease or something else?

What Russell says about one of them is true of all four : If he is a mere symptom, the disease must be very widespread in the modern world.

In their different ways all four authors are eschatological, even if none seems to believe in a fairy-tale triumph of good over evil. On the contrary, they spoke the truth as they had found it, the truth that hurts (perhaps because it is incomplete). Also they seem to be better equipped to define the human crisis than to suggest remedies. Their function is primarily negative. Dostoevsky and Nietzsche did now and then, on the wings of agony, rise to sudden splendour, but Kierkegaard and Kafka are not moral visionaries in that sense.

It is not surprising that all of them suffered from contemporary neglect and their untimely opinions and revelations had to wait for recognition. Their criticism, veiled or direct, was too cruel to be relished by the age. Abhorring sham, they themselves were not above eccentricity, theatricality and other quirks of the creative ugly duckling. Kierkegaard accused the Church of his time for having debased the deity, made a fool of God. Dostoevsky revealed the thousand demons that lurked in the human soul. Nietzsche found both the bourgeois and the Christian world stupid and un-manly. Kafka saw a society without sanctions, wholly given over to evil and the anti-human, which is another name for the scientific and the welfare state. In all this man has become a useless passion.

Solitary and disillusioned, their relation to the country of their origin and its culture remains ambivalent. Their real habitat was in the country of the mind, the future, which spells itself as our present. All had given up the profession for which he had been trained : Kierkegaard as pastor, Dostoevsky for the military, Nietzsche as classical philologist, Kafka as jurist and official. Each suffered from the feeling of being unloved, perhaps the greatest privation for the sensitive. There is little happiness in their world, private or creative. All were frustrated in their relation to women and, no wonder, lack normal charity and rootedness.

Nietzsche wrote of *The Joyful Wisdom*. In vain. He was happy only when mad. The lonely man, who is the tragic man, is invariably the man who loves life dearly—which is to say, the joyful man, Thomas Wolfe has written. That may be true of "God's Lonely Man", but not of these exiles from heaven and home.

Strangely, each had a passion for confession. And what they confessed was crisis and confusion, gloom and dark despair of the spirit. Kierkegaard and Kafka wrote Diaries. Dostoevsky's projected autobiographical *The Life of a Great Sinner* was never completed, but his life and works were fairly complimentary. Nietzsche, "self-knower and self-executioner" (and truth to tell, self-betrayer), lays bare his soul in a series of searching corrosive correspondence till insanity overtakes the heated brain.

All were city men, the city which would be the first to reveal the collapse of industrial society, which lives by fragmentation of function and the dehumanization of the masses. Yet, however acute their analysis, it is intensely subjective and not to be counted as on par with scientific sociology. That is its strength and weakness. Kierkegaard sparked off a new thinking among the orthodox. More truly, he made the un-orthodox majority rethink their position with regard to orthodoxy. In emphasizing a lonely encounter with the Lord he sounds like a Hamletian Whitehead without the latter's sophisticated serenity, that harvest of tragedy. Dostoevsky dramatized the duality in human nature, or history's real cross in the tortured and corrupted conscience of man. Nietzsche shouted from the housetops his barbaric thought, in search of a new rule and ruler. In the process he perhaps energized error more than fertilized truth. Kafka provides a cool surgery on the soul-less patient, in the era of will-less, hope-less sub-men in a society which does not know what it lives by or for.

Together the four provide—or fail to provide—an answer to André Malraux's question: Can man in the twentieth century survive God's death in the nineteenth? As it is, their negations look more positive than anything that the age

has supplied so far. And so, as alienists, they triumph. But if ever the genius of health and harmony, of normal vision were to return to an atomised and brutalised society, if ever the genius for fission were to mate with the genius for fusion, we might know them better and need them less. The finest epitaph on these men and the movement they represent could be erected out of two stray remarks, made by Ivan Karmazov and by Nietzsche : Who does not desire his father's death ? and Which child has not had reason to be ashamed of his parents ?

TRADITION AND MODERNITY

These days we are all modernity-snobs. And that creates problems. On his side the traditionalist is unwilling to yield an inch and shows no sign of accepting or understanding the age, its problems and potentialities. No wonder the conflict between Tradition and Modernity shows no signs of abating. In the tug-of-war between the Ancients and the Progressives perhaps both parties are in the wrong.

• The problem, as it exists, is no doubt western in origin. But, then, how does one distinguish the modern? Surely it is not the same thing as being a contemporary. In that case we would all be modern, which is just not so. Is the Atom Bomb more modern than the crossbow? D. H. Lawrence than Khajuraho? The Beatles (as they at least claim) than Jesus Christ? The major difference between the old and the new is perhaps not so much marked in the humanities as in the logic and practice of science. It is Reason and Science and their combined product, Industrialism, that mark the Great Divide.

The scientists are the priests and magicians of the New Dispensation. And—contrary to the traditional image of man—the Dispensation would seem to run as follows: the most important task to which the human mind may devote itself is the control of nature through technology (Bacon); Man may be completely understood if he is considered to be an animal (Hobbes); all animals, except man, are machines (Descartes); man also is an animal, therefore, a machine (Darwin); the human condition is determined not by

philosophy, religion or moral ideas but by economic factors (Marx).

To bring the list up to date we should add two more characteristics: that man is really or mostly a creature of unconscious drives, to repress which is dangerous, and that the taboos of civilization are undesirable (Freud); and finally, God being dead, as proof of our ultimate freedom, everything becomes possible, if not absurd (Existentialism).

Thrown into such an emancipated, if emasculated and absurd universe, full of tension, complexity and uncertainty we have to make the most of it. Openly or by implication the modern order of ideas favours Reductionism, which is a way of explaining the higher—or what used to be considered as higher—in terms of the lower. Strictly speaking, modernity and the modern age are based on categorical confusions. The whole thing is a refinement of the profane point of view. Western man, as some of their own thinkers now tell us, has made an evil choice or series of false choices. And now, willynilly, we have been drawn into their orbit. Their yesterday is our today. But is it necessary to repeat the process? And is our situation quite the same as theirs? Modern India revels in anachronism. We boast of synthesis, but what we really have is little other than co-existence. This we parade as the height of wisdom or toleration. But the inability or refusal to change, swiftly and permanently, our ways of life and thought, to repudiate the entire past and racial experience, in order to please the shadowy Time-Spirit may admit of a more inward judgment. A too ready assimilation or a radical transformation would have been a sorry exchange, and would have profited neither us nor the rest of the world. What is required is a new synthesis.

The meeting of the East and the West, or encounter between civilisations, to use Toynbee's phrase, has produced results the end of which is not yet in sight. Among the values of the nearly forgotten Indian Renaissance, three may be singled out. First, it brought about, in however limited or imitative a manner, the spirit of rational enquiry. Secondly, it introduced the modern temper in our dealing

with the past. Finally, it led us to revalue the past dispassionately. Its early mistakes are less important than its services in freeing us from an uncritical bondage to the past, however glorious 'once upon a time'. Creativity is certainly not a matter of the past tense. That is but the nostalgic fallacy.*

One thing is clear : no mere return to the 'good old days' will serve our turn. That way lies madness. Even the reactionaries know that in their heart of hearts. Modern conservatism has evolved its own technique, it has called science to its aid, including the neglected science of self and the hope of an integrated society, the recurring dream.

As we have said before, the one single factor responsible for what is happening today is Industrialism and the philosophy of life that goes along with it. Its impact on the traditional codes and beliefs is obvious. Now it has reached the villages, the bedrock of the old order. Caste and the joint-family system, on which our rural economy was based, have gone or are going. Thanks to the community radio, the newspapers, the vocal opposition parties, the spiralling prices, the greater mobility of the population and such new institutions as the hotels, hostels, hospitals, restaurants, etc., the old taboos no longer operate. The country yokel as well as the old womenfolk, keepers of our ancient ethos, are no longer content to accept *Karma* or *Kismet* as a valid explanation for their lot. There is also the undeniable influence of Communism which is blatantly critical of whatever is 'traditional'. Its only tradition, one might say, is Revolution. Strangely, the Indian attitude is not so much anti-scientific as anti-materialist. After all, among the world religions Hinduism has been the least affected by the march of science. And this will be so so long as our sadhus, yogis and mystics and the system of spiritual disciplines continue to be there. While some look upon these as the heart of Aryavarta others, more modern, would like to remove these ailing organs.

* Rather "like old kerosene lamps that smoke instead of giving light—not a pastime to be recommended". Ilya Ehrenburg, *What I Have Learned*

Which is the truer view ? And is a balanced view impossible ?

That is, is there a way out, not only for India but for the world of which India is but a part ? How is this to be found ? The need for fresh thinking must be the first step forward. It is perhaps a good sign that Mechanomorphism is about to end. With this let us hope will go the myth of the isolated, competitive individuals, swayed by fears and desires. The ethics of the lonely wolf must give place to a new personalized ethics. The sacrifice of the individual at the altar of an impersonal monster, the Almighty State, is a rather heavy price to pay for the privilege of living in a modern age. This change, from I-versus-you to I-We-Thou-and-All (Buber's famous formula), will not, however, be brought about by machinery or institutional fiat, not from the outside. The change must come from within or not at all. The model of an inner or ultimate revolution calls for maturity and patience. May be in the long run we may have to change our theory of causation. In any case, the laws of the physical sciences cannot be applied, *ad lib*, to the biological sciences, much less to specifically human values and concerns. As the metaphysics of modern science is now about to admit, it is necessary to realize that because something is non-material it does not follow that it is unreal. In fact, the reverse is likely to be true.

All these do not add up to a ban on science or a neglect of the outer forms or normal interests of life. Far from it. The higher balance between the outer and the inner, the past and the present, between science and spirituality, will itself call for the highest skill and wisdom.

This cannot be done by a retreat to the cave and renouncing the world. It calls for world-affirmation and Reverence for Life, an awareness of both time and the timeless. We have no desire to give up the gains or the spirit of modern adventure. We wish to profit even by its tensions and complexities which shake us out of complacence, if nothing else. The real trouble with modernity is its myopia, its lack of perspective. This is what tradition at its best might provide. To give an example of the likely synthesis : it will

not be an abdication of action, but will be based on a purification of motive, a much harder thing. As Dag Hammarskjöld has shown, in our days the road to holiness lies through action. And what will be the inspiration of that action? Briefly, it will be a spiritual religion of humanity, the last and most neglected of the gospels of the French Revolution, fraternity. This no mechanism can manufacture or manipulate. You have to grow into it, recognise the need and truth of it. Here is a possible meeting-ground, for this is the heart of tradition as of modernity.

Perhaps, behind the veil, it is towards something like this that we are moving or groping. Perhaps the quarrel between tradition and modernity is not all bad. What we need, to end the quarrel, is a revolutionary concept of tradition, the Great Tradition beyond all the little traditions, beyond the little self-satisfied frozen systems, the pure distilled heritage of the past which is never wholly lost. *Sanatana iva nitya mutanah*, the eternal alone is ever new. A concern with tradition is not the same thing as to be dominated by the past. What Winston Churchill once said in a fateful hour of England's history seems to be true of all history: "Of this I am quite sure that if we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future." Or, as Sri Aurobindo sees it: "The traditions of the past are very great in their own place. . . but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. . . . The great past should be followed by a greater future." It is such a spirit of wise adventure that should guide us. To be true to both tradition and modernity is our task today. Neither the rabid old-timer nor the no less rabid futurist can help us. They are both simplifiers who avoid the agonies of choice and the need for balance which is another name for life today.

In retrospect the essays, spread over a period of years, seem to pursue a common theme: that under the surface, men are alike and life is holy. But the author holds no brief for any particular system, country or culture, only for an attitude or experience, of inclusive affirmation. Commuting easily between two cultures, these sensitively written essays reveal a range of passion and deep concern, a sheer humanity and virtuosity which is one of the happier signs of the new writing in India, rooted in the perennial but watered by the modern world, anxious and divided.

"Here is an Indian Socrates, filling the role of a gad-fly to modern culture. Behind his stings is a genial spirit who retains faith and hope."

E. A. Burtt

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